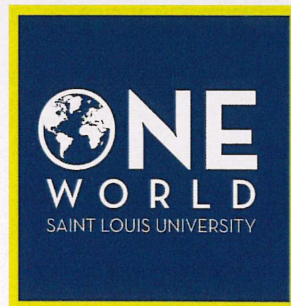




NEWORLD

Spring 2021 | Saint Louis University

BRIDGES AND BORDERS



Visit our website!

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 1

OneWorld Magazine

Spring 2021

Beatrice Beirne*

Editor-in-Charge, Senior Editor

Designer: Adams, Cardakli, Cieslarczyk, George, Karthikeyan, Manivannan, Sanapti, R. Shah

Editor-in-Charge is the campus equivalent of Editor-in-Chief

Lexi Kayser*

Copy Editor, Section Editor,

Senior Editors

Alexis Guffey*

Claire Heggie*

Karan Modi

Meha Patel*

Priya Shah*

Section Editors

Ava Gagner*

Lillian Adams*

Morgan Kelly

Abby Kwon

Creative Director,

Designer: Aarti Sahai, Siddiqua, Heggie, Kayser

Sanjott Singh

Assistant Creative Director,

Designer: Cover concept, Firdaus, A. Patel, Prible

Anagha Arla*

Designer: Arla, Keller, Mustafic, Sajwani

Angelina White*

Designer: Kadiwala, Lund-Molfese, Mogallapalli

Anthony Nguyen

Designer: Bassi, Mac Laughlin

Blair Valdes*

Designer: Collum, Guffey, Henn

Jennifer Smith*

Designer: Beirne, Chiodo, Cover

Lia Basden

Designer: Parikh, P. Shah, Simon

Manyu Mogallapalli

Designer: Gagner, Hill

Satya Sanapti*

Designer: Burke, Hamby, Raval

Waghar Osmun*

Designer: Makhoul, Rajalaksmi, Wachnik

Jessica Henn*

Finance Chair, Senior Editor

Pranjali Rajalaksmi*

Publicity Chair

Supriya Ellina

Event Coordinator

Lauren Hamby*

Assistant Finance Chair, Senior Editor

Maddy Joplin*

Assistant Publicity Chair, Designer: Arjun Sahai, Vavrik

Riya Shah*

Assistant Event Coordinator

Lauren Tubbe*

Website Coordinator, Designer: VanNierop

Anagha Arla*, Aman Bassi*

Wellness Chairs

Patrick Hunt

Distribution Coordinator

* denotes staff writer or staff designer

Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

My favorite moment has happened again. Through my computer screen, she gleams at me with no words moving from her mouth. It's been about three hours of trimming and tidying her article and we've finally come to a conclusive ending. Four minutes ago we decided on what to write, and she's just now starting to speak again: silenced by her own words.

"Wow," she whispers. "I love it."

There's a self-censored phrase I've come to employ in these OneWorld editing sessions: "You have all the right pieces, we just need to make sure they're in the right place." It's my way of saying that we are going to lob off this chunk right here and make room for something better that I'm going to tease out of you in a few minutes. I find that the politeness of this -ism saves us time, patience and hatred from my writers. It's true after all—we're all just moving pieces trying to move our own pieces.

In this edition of OneWorld, conflictly titled "Bridge & Borders," we prompted ourselves with the real and imagined limitations and latitudes of our world. Join us in our examinations of what we build and break, destroy and make. Let's talk about borders—like redlining, class warfare and the gender binary—and bridges—like the American infrastructure crisis, bipartisanship and international diplomacy. From literal border walls to DACA as a figurative bridge to citizenship, we explore sociopolitical bridges and borders in an effort to better understand our modern dystopia. As always, we looked at ourselves this semester, whether through anecdotes, criticisms or concessions of confusion—I was reminded of a very personal bridge.

When I was younger, I was a Daisy—the Girl Scouts that wear blue aprons. There were three levels, conveniently outlined in the bold colors of our smocks; I was a blue Daisy, the highest was a green Junior and, in between, was a brown Brownie. As a Daisy, being a brown-vest-wearing Brownie was the height of all excellence. My older sister was a Brownie and, for some reason, the color of her uniform made me feel like she was some kind of otherworldly aspiration.

At the end of the year, when Daisies were elevated to their stations as Brownies, we had what was called a "bridging ceremony"—a graduation of sorts where the older girls escorted us to join them at the next level.

With my mother watching, my sister walked me across the symbolic bridge and, in my mind, made me a real person capable of doing real things. The border didn't exist when I looked back; it was just this scary thing I was always afraid to cross without someone's hand holding mine. It wasn't so much my size four shoes stepping across the papier-mâché bridge that made me different: but the notion of confidence from someone who was important to me.

We all have the ability to walk someone across the bridge; the people who will create change are here. They are our siblings who lift us up and our friends who check in on us. They are the people who start petitions but also share them. They are professors, protesters and pessimists, all seeking to reverse injustices, end Asian hate or appreciate the pronouns of everyone at the table. Senator Cory Booker once wrote that we can't let our inability to do everything undermine our determination to do something. That's comfortingly true. You need not concern

yourself with carrying an army across an ocean; focus instead on how you will provide a helping hand.

When you picture yourself in pain—at your most frustrated or lowest low—what keeps you down in these moments? What shuts you in and breaks you apart? Whatever it is, it's a real and pervasive problem. It's a seemingly unwavering line that boxes out your happiness. It's a border.

In these moments of sadness or pain, you are—like always—never alone; you're just feeling trapped. That's why we need bridges. A good friend, thoughtful therapist or sympathetic stranger. The people in life that ground us can very much be the ones that lift us up off the ground.

The almost impossible task of overcoming personal pain—loneliness, frustration, overstimulation or fatigue—becomes attainable when we honor and orient our bridges in a way that serves ourselves and others. Check ins, vulnerability and love languages are all bridges that we build to help each other in tough times. Borders are breakable only when we build bridges.

Nostalgia has become uncircumventable as a I reflect on my last semester with the magazine, where I spent eight semesters as a writer (seven as a writer who finished in time to be printed), three as a designer, four as Editor-in-Chief (now known as "Editor-in-Charge"). If we didn't spend every issue condemning privilege, I'd say it was a great one to be a part of this team.

I have to thank Andrew Smith, Stella Jeong and Maddie Baumgart, leaders during my start, and Maddie Hellebush, my first Editor-in-Chief Jackie Weber for being a confidant and the American Studies Department for propelling me to study something important. My parents, for convincingly feigning eagerness for each new draft about a global tragedy while always supporting me unrelentingly; my sister, the writer; my brother, the thinker; and my grandmother, the Democratic Socialist who taught me how to read children's books with a penchant for critiquing capitalism.

For the tenacious staff who puts up with me, especially our incomparable executive board. For all my muses—from conservatives to kids at the border—I have more compassion for the latter but the former forces me to write more ferociously. Earnestly and plainly articulating the pains of our existence provides a path to renewed action; we all become better—if not slightly bitter—when we focus on fixing what's wrong. The balance between who we are and what we want to be is built by the bridges and borders we construct.

I hope to leave this thing better than I found it. I know it has certainly done that for me.

On behalf of OneWorld,

Beatrice Beirne, Editor-in-Chief

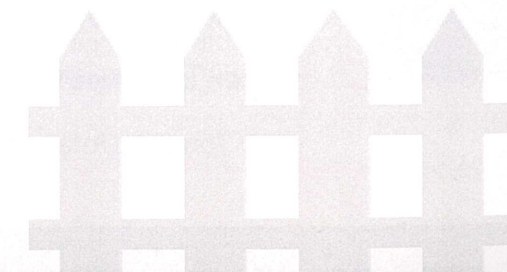


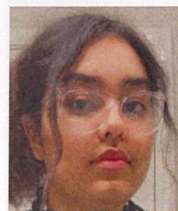
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Learning From the Past for the Future of Healthcare	1
Instant Message Insurrection: The Rapid Growth of Alt-Right Online	3
From Home to School: Relearning Relationships After Childhood Trauma	5
Having More Saves More: Supporting Rural Healthcare Workers	7
Making Molehills Out of Mountains: Adapting to Change during COVID-90	9
Chess' First Move in Gender Equality: Piercing Together a More Unified Community	11
Intergenerational Recovery: Treating the Children of the Opioid Crisis	13
Pick Up the Slack(tivism)	15
Spoken Spaces: Inclusive Language in Excluding Places	17
Not Just Numbers: Undocumented Immigration and the U.S Census	19
Bodybags: Military Prevention for Diseases of Despair	21
Lone Star, Loretta Lynn and Learning to Fight Right	23
The Reality of Pregnancy for BIPOC Parents	24
Neglected Nation: The Influence of Water Poverty on Navajo Health	25
Cultural Competency in Medicine and the Art of Social Justice: Exclusive, Intertwined or Interdependent?	27
When the Cost of Work is Progress: Examining the Ghastly and Gendered Exploitation of Unpaid Interns	29
Coexist, Not Colonialist: New Goals Amid American Christians' Privilege	31
Repression of Rights: Modi's Response to the Farmer's Protest	32
Beyond the Bookshelf	33
Connection Beyond Wifi: The Pros and Cons of Zoom	35
When Life Gives You LuluLemons	36
Fair Tones & Unfair Standards: Colorism, Beauty and the Media	37

39	Parks and Revitalization: Providing Mental Health in Urban Spaces
41	Reading Ruins for Commemorative Justice
43	Reading for the Revolution: How Dystopian Literature Teaches Young Adults to Think Critically
45	Resurrection from Insurrection
47	The Gateway Gap: Equitable Access in Saint Louis City
49	The Weight of Health
51	Cultural Preservation Amid Imperialist Borders: A Look into Badakhshan's Autonomy
53	Alternatives to Abuse: Reducing Animal Experimentation and Consumption
55	To Escape or to Face: COVID-19 in the Film Industry
57	Income Together
59	Cutting Down the Red Tape in Healthcare
61	Hijras, Hinduism and the History of Gender Identity
63	你能读懂我吗?: the Key to Connection is Language
65	Where Are They Now? Refugee Children in the "See Something, Say Something" Era
67	A House Divided
69	From Application to Advancement: Workplace Barriers for Differently-Abled People
71	Race, Redlining and Red Pens: The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Education
73	Information is Everything: Rural Education and Celebrity Scientists
75	Living in a Man's World: The "To-Do List"
77	Support, not Shame: Confronting the Conversation on Eating Disorders
79	Driving Poverty: Exploitation, Immigration and Taxi Cabs
81	It Starts with the Family: Destigmatizing Mental Health for South Asian Children

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEARNING FROM THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE



Aseya Siddiqua

She/Her
First-Year
Neuroscience

In December of 2016, Dr. Atul Gawande, surgeon and professor at Harvard Medical School, sat down with the CEO of the American Association of Medical Colleges, Darrell G. Kirch. The pair discussed where the future of health care was headed. Though the interview happened in 2016, Gawande's vision of the health care system and how it should operate still applies today. He talked about two main aspects of the health care industry that he believes will change: information processing and staff community of a hospital. All the points made in this interview are as relevant as ever, and we have seen many of them happen in the last year.

According to reference website Worldometers, there are currently 127,900,420 COVID-19 cases around the world. While the mortality rate has been increasing, we should also acknowledge the fact that among those cases, 103,081,845 people have recovered completely. This was made possible by our hardworking doctors, nurses and hospital staff that have been laboring around the clock, and the abundance of essential health care workers worldwide.

2020 has been one of the toughest years

for people in these careers. We have seen their resilience, strength and willpower in ensuring each person gets the best health care. However, this pandemic has also uncovered some faults in the health care industry, including inadequate access, rising costs of insurance and poor treatment of hospital staff. Despite all these conditions, we witnessed immense dedication and diligence during the pandemic. Due to their perseverance and care, health care workers deserve positive and productive changes to their field. In their 2016 discussion, Gawande and Kirch provided a road map for how to help the people who we call heroes. First, Gawande emphasized the type of information that should be used for diagnosis. We all know our physical information is always the most prominent—our blood pressure, thyroid levels and immunizations records can all be measured or calculated in the office. But what about the things that cannot be measured or seen, such as our mental health, family upbringing or socioeconomic status? This psychosocial information is just as important.

Gawande believes that "the amount of data that actually matters will only get larger. We will discover how it's not just their high blood pressure or cholesterol level that matters, but how lonely they are or what kind of family environment they are in." During the pandemic, many of us witnessed this firsthand.

In a research article from The Lancet, it was found that due to the pandemic, many undiagnosed mental health conditions were increasing, and more prescriptions were given to patients because of these conditions. When I had a doctor's appointment last year, they focused on my mental well-being as well as physical health. It felt very new. My doctor gave me resources on how to cope with anxiety during uncertain times.

Gawande was right in hypothesizing that health care is driven by information; the recognition of mental health's impact on physical health has led to an increase in our health care information pool during COVID-19. Additionally, since everything is increasingly digitized, it will be much easier for our future physicians to store and categorize clinical and psychological information about a patient.

Gawande secondly suggested improvement to health care involves what he thinks will change the way the industry operates. Hospitals are still currently hierarchical; there is a head person who gives orders to everyone else. However, the recent increase in medical school applications is hinting toward the fact that more people will be joining the health care industry, and will have to work in teams to provide the best care possible.

Gawande states, "Just as in the operating room, we are teams of equals having to pull around our patient, not the surgeon's patient," meaning it takes collaboration from multiple health care workers to help someone. In the complex health care systems we have around the world, fostering teamwork is essential for patients. It minimizes many potential errors that occur when only one person is handling a patient. It also makes the patient more relaxed knowing they are in the hands of several experts who are ready to help them at any time. We need better supportive, familial communities of healthcare staff.

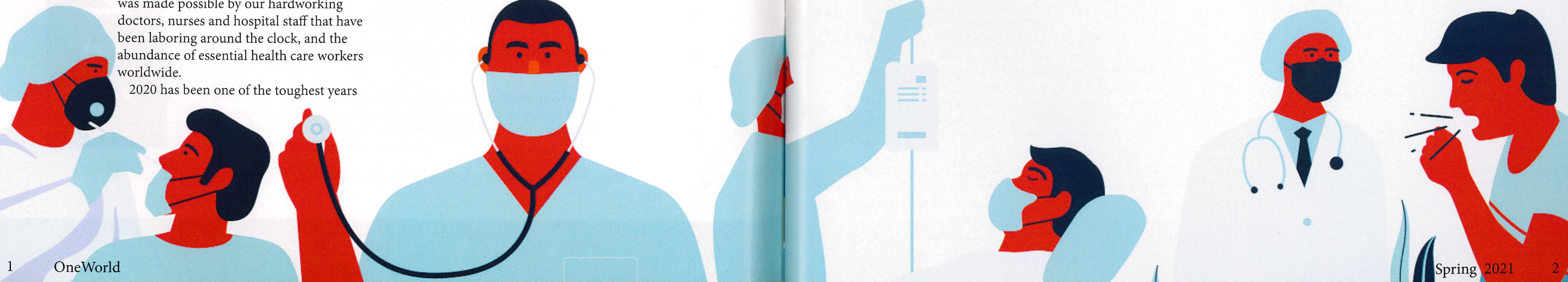
This is a very important change that I believe will be relevant even 10 years into the future. Instead of working like a business, health care officials will have to work in effective teams. These teams, according Amir Babiker in the Sudanese Journal of Paediatrics, will allow all members,

including patients, to communicate properly, share their observations and come to the best decisions that optimize the patients' care.

To recap, Gawande recommends big improvements to information processing and staff communities in medicine. Healthcare workers will be most helped by these changes, because they currently have tiring conditions. Improvements to the system are improvements to the system's administrators. Patients will also benefit. The standard of healthcare will increase, giving patients a peace of mind as they know they are in good hands.

These changes need to be made for the benefit of both parties: patients and providers. Health care workers need to have improved work conditions so they can provide the best health care to people in need. If we had already implemented these, then we would have been a bit more prepared for COVID-19. These changes will help us during this pandemic, as well as any future unprecedented times.

Given our circumstances, we need to think about the future and learn from our mistakes in the past. Our health care workers had to adapt and change in the face of this adversity, and we have to make these changes now so that we can ensure they are not overworked again. If implemented, Gawande's suggestions for change will cause our standard of health care to go up, as well as our empathy and compassion through holistic health care. When it comes to our health care's future, sometimes it helps to look to the past.



INSTANT MESSAGE INSURRECTION: THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE ALT-RIGHT ONLINE



Claire Heggie

She/Her

Sophomore

Political Science & Economics

On January 6, 2021 armed protestors stormed the United States Capitol building in hopes of disrupting the count of Electoral College votes that would formalize the victory of President Joe Biden. With thousands of protestors on the outside, insurrectionists tore past barricades and Capitol police to enter the House floor and various legislators' offices, ransacking the building and leaving four people dead. This was the first time the Capitol had been breached in over 200 years, and the first time an insurrection has been incited by a sitting president.

For weeks prior to this coup, former President

Donald Trump continually encouraged his supporters on social media to come to the Capitol on January 6, to protest the formalization of the November 2020 election results, or to "stop the steal" as he repeatedly said. In the weeks leading up to the insurrection, Trump tweeted, "Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!" He continually perpetuated the notion that he had actually won the election and that there has been widespread voter fraud—despite the fact that there is no evidence to suggest misconduct in the November 2020 election, according to The New York Times. Upon the direction of the former president, alt-right groups on social media organized a "Stop the Steal" protest and insurrection on January 6.

Perpetuating violence and false narratives on social media platforms is nothing new for conservative organizations. Conservatives have an advantage when spreading factually inaccurate messages on social media, like Facebook and Reddit, in that they are often able to appeal to users' emotions such as fear and anger. An unidentified Facebook executive told Politico that "right-wing populism is always more engaging... the content speaks to an incredibly strong, primitive emotion."

According to the Facebook-owned tool Crowdtangle, during the final weeks of the 2020 presidential campaign, the Facebook posts in the United States with the most engagement were from conservative figures outside of mainstream media including Ben Shapiro, Franklin Graham and Donald Trump himself. Left-wing posts made the top 25 much less frequently than these conservative voices.

While conservative messaging gains support because it plays on fear, there is also evidence to suggest that Facebook, itself, plays a large role in perpetuating these conspiracy theories and alt-right groups. Biden campaign spokesperson Bill Russo said, "It is a choice to create an algorithm that feeds the distrust and polarization that are tearing us apart." In fact, the Facebook algorithm has learned to recommend posts and groups to users who have related interests, effectively increasing the platform for conspiracy theories such as "Stop the Steal."

Research conducted by Facebook's own internal team published in the Wall Street Journal found that over 64% of the users joining these extremist right wing groups were doing so because of prompts from the recommendation engine. It is apparent that Facebook is

playing a significant role in increasing the engagement for groups that organize violent movements such as the January 6 insurrection.

The "Stop the Steal" movement broke down both physical and ideological barriers across the nation. Not only were protestors from all over the country, but many had varying political objectives. Whether it was far-right conspiracy theorists, moderate Trump supporters or pure anarchists, they all were united through social media, primarily Facebook. Social media provides the means to unite various conspiracy or conservative factions to collaborate on their greater goal of violence and civil unrest. "Stop the Steal" began almost immediately after the November 2020 election. Under the encouragement and misinformation spread by then-President Trump, participation in conservative Facebook groups about election fraud spiked significantly.

Dominick McGee was an owner of one of these Facebook groups. For years, his posts only received a few likes and comments. However, after the most recent presidential election, he began sharing content related to voter fraud and "Stop the Steal." These posts received significantly more attention, garnering over 1500 likes and 440 comments. Eventually, he started his own Facebook group called "Win the Win." Tens of thousands of people joined immediately, and by the time that McGee arrived at the Capitol on January 6, there were over 61,000 members of his group. Even though he lost touch with many of his family members and lost business for his credit repair company due to his posts, Dominick told The New York Times that "my beliefs overrun my fears of not being accepted."

Dominick was able to find community, acceptance and motivation through far-right Facebook groups. These

groups can suck in radical and moderate conservatives alike and, once their beliefs have gotten too extreme for their friends or family, users find a new community online. This sense of acceptance is so central to human beings, however it has proven to be dangerous when individuals have the ability to connect in order to perpetuate misinformation and violence. As we saw on January 6, physical manifestations of these connections not only have the ability to threaten lives, but the very essence of our American democracy.

Many have called on Facebook to take responsibility for this spread of misinformation and danger online. However, they have yet to implement concrete measures to counter this. According to Olivia Solon, reporter for NBC News, the company currently operates on a strike basis, which means that if a group posts false information then they have a warning before the company takes action. False information is determined by an independent, third party fact checking source. The post is then sent to be determined whether or not it should be "escalated"—basically whether or not it could turn into a PR nightmare. Posts flagged as high priority are much more likely to be taken down quickly, while lower priority posts may stay up indefinitely.

Many advocates call for stricter and swifter policies for Facebook to counteract the spread of misinformation on social media. We do not have time to wait for incremental changes from Facebook; January 6 proved how dangerous these groups can be, and the count down to the next radical conservative catastrophe has already begun. Social media is not just a website anymore, it is a tool for organization and a weapon of white supremacy. The rapid spread of misinformation calls for a rapid response, and changing the way we regulate alt-right groups online is critical to preserving democracy, discourse and lives. The danger is as real as Facebook allows it to be.



From Home to School: Relearning Relationships After Childhood Trauma



Irma Mustafic
She/Her
Junior
Health Sciences

The transition into the COVID-19 pandemic forced many households across the U.S. to quarantine together. Since they are spending so much time in close-quarters with their guardians, children may face traumatic events which they would normally use their school environment to escape from. However, schools across the nation have also transformed their role by providing learning remotely.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network defines childhood trauma as frightening, dangerous or violent events that may occur or be witnessed in a child's life that may cause a threat to life itself. Examining the effects of traumatic events a child may endure early in life can be a precursor to halted development seen later in life. These disturbances in development can be exhibited by the child's functioning in school, social life and later troubles in adulthood, where it is natural to have more daily stressors. Examining the biological and cognitive-behavioral development of traumatized versus non-traumatized children, can further provide an understanding of how these events cause an abnormal psychological change, and can aid in selecting solutions that can facilitate recovery.

The most studied biological stress system is the limbic-hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (LHPA); this system involves the interaction between the limbic, hypothalamus and pituitary structures of the brain and the adrenal glands of the endocrine system. Authors Connie Allen and Valerie Harper of "Anatomy and Physiology 6th Edition," provide that the adrenal glands play the role of releasing adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), which stimulates the secretion of cortisol. Other hormones such as corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) signal the adrenal glands to release in times of stress. According to the National Institute of Health, elevated levels of CRH occur within the onset of traumatic events. Although it has been determined that CRH secretions generally elevate into adulthood, initial starting levels of ACTH and cortisol can result in higher levels of CRH at baseline to be met due to chronic exposures.

This finding suggests that certain children who are chronically exposed to stressful events adapt to regulate their body's response to the stress and prevent physical harm. Children who are met with traumatic events in everyday life already have an elevated CRH level, in contrast to children who do not experience the effects

of stress as often. Due to the overstimulation of the body's stress response, the brain can also begin to display the consequences from traumatic events.

Dr. Todd Thatcher of Highland Springs Health Clinic informs that in parts of the amygdala, the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex are hyperactive in traumatized children. According to Thatcher, studies have been shown that people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have an overall smaller hippocampal volume than others who have not been affected by trauma chronically. Due to the increased activity of the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, emotions such as fear, anxiety and irritation are seen more often as the brain perceives danger or threat.

It is often said that hardships in life make a person "age." Neuroscientist Bruce McEwen has sought out the answer to this question. In "Physiology and Neurobiology of Stress and Adaptation: Central Role of the Brain," McEwen explains that early life experiences have an even greater impact on how an individual reacts to new situations in life. Living with cold and uncaring families produces long-lasting emotional problems for children. These effects may be seen in overall brain structure, thus increasing the risk of depression and PTSD later in life. This discovery has further been applied to the study of childhood trauma.

According to the National Institute of Health, the increasing load of childhood stressors heightens a child's vulnerability to impacts of stress. As children are exposed to traumatic events at an early age, the impacts may go unnoticed until early adulthood. Certain children can be distant and appear independent. As they refrain from interacting with their peers, this sense of isolation may have been exhibited during the initial time of stress. The sense of isolation during the actual event of trauma gave the child the sense of safety and relief. This habit can further go unnoticed—or may not even appear abnormal—to the child themselves.

There are many cases portrayed in movies, TV shows and documentaries of children who are able to become successful after chronic exposure to traumatic events. Likewise, there are also children who have a harder time adjusting to a normal life in adulthood due to the same reasons. According to the Institute for Attachment and Child Development, early attachment bonding between a child and caregiver can be a major factor regarding why certain children can go unaffected by traumatic events. The lack of attachment between a caregiver and a child results in learning survival behaviors that show an insecure form of attachment; the most at risk children for mental illnesses come from parents displaying a disorganized-disoriented parent attachment.

In this attachment, children are exposed to their caregiver and this has unpredictable, frightening and out of control effects. As expressed by Institute for Attachment and Child Development, children who grow up in this environment are conditioned to distrust all relationships and often isolate themselves from others. In some cases, children who deal with the loss of one parent do not necessarily fall through the cracks of substance abuse, mental illness or behavior problems at school. The strong supportive attachment between the single parent can still provide the child a sense of security. Fostering the idea of early attachment between the child and caregiver suggests that resilience can be seen differently in traumatized and non-traumatized children.

Early detection of a child going through troubles at home may be seen in their behaviors displayed at school. Traumatized children exhibit behaviors that often reflect an insecure persona. The inability of forming relationships with their teachers and an overall pattern of negative thinking prevents a child from having a sense of belonging and positivity.

The conditioned defense mechanisms that the child has grown up using for a sense of safety from stressful events at home are displayed in the classroom as well. A study from Antioch University in Santa Barbara observed these mechanisms in the classroom, which include talking back to the teacher, tardiness, incomplete assignments and lack of attention. One of the major challenges in the school system is that this misbehavior is wrongly interpreted; in the current system, rather than addressing the problem of why a child is acting differently, disciplinary actions are taken that withdraw attention and support from the child. The level of patience is often low between a school professional and a student at this time. However, it is crucial to consider that children who are suspended from school are often sent back to unideal home environments.

Dr. Nancy Rappaport, associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, expresses the importance of schools' efforts to work on changing behaviors in troubled children rather than suspending them. The communication and acknowledgement of emotions with children can prevent them from being alienated, and not be driven away from adults who are trying to help them.

The gateway to incarceration may even begin with a first time referral. The well-known cycle named the "school-to-prison-pipeline" examines the path that students can be pushed down, when leaving classroom discipline and becoming more vulnerable to the outside environment and juvenile correction system. Further, with the lack of a support system at home, children are left alone to find solutions to their problems. The environment surrounding the child may also steer their development to become stunted from exposure to substance abuse and gang violence.

Antioch University's research suggests that

introducing trauma-informed education and practices, such as mindfulness, in schools can make a positive impact on child behavior. The state of California has put these new findings to the test across many school systems. According to EdSource journalist David Washburn, a \$15 million reform bill was passed in 2018, in effort to eliminate policies that cause students to be suspended. Instead, schools are to develop programs that allow for screening and intervention for potentially traumatized children. This form of advocacy further supports the idea from Rappaport that troubled children should be given support on changing their behaviors, rather than be disciplined. By moving away from disciplinary strategies to a comforting supportive system, troubled children should not feel alienated from the school system and the overall justice system at such an early age.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, children are vulnerable to new and worsening mental illnesses. Americans have varying school choices, from public to private and co-ed to single gender schools, and accessibility to mental health resources may also be different. Childhood trauma can be a sensitive topic to discuss in the school setting, however having no conversation only fuels greater stigmatizations.

According to the Treatment and Services Adaptation Center, schools may benefit from a trauma-informed structural setting. In this setting, facilities in the school community are prepared to recognize and respond to those who have been impacted by traumatic stress. Those adults include administrators, teachers, staff, counselors and social workers. These measures can be done through student assessments, observing school behavior and one-on-one mentoring. Students are provided with clear expectations and communication strategies to guide them through stressful situations. The outcome of this structure not only provides tools to cope with extreme situations, but creates an underlying culture of respect and support in the school. In cases where children do not feel comfortable to discuss their circumstances at home, one's school can become a place of security.

The child welfare system in the U.S. manifests the role that with helpful, responsible adults in a child's life, children can and will recover from their circumstances. Schools can become safe havens for children to foster and allow for support from adults who are able to recognize and respond to various childhood circumstances. By initiating healthy relationships in schools, children can feel more secure from stressors at home, social environment, peers and more. The cycle of childhood trauma can be broken in future generations to help foster a secure path for recovery.

Having More Saves More

Supporting Rural Healthcare Workers



Priya Shah
She/Her
Junior
Neuroscience

Imagine waking up in the middle of the night and experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, but being 45 minutes away from the nearest testing facility. You would not know what to do. Or imagine working in a health care facility where there is one nurse per every 15 patients; there is a chance that you might lose a life because you were waiting for the nurse to attend to your call, but she had been busy at the time. Imagine needing an ambulance, after a loved one has suffered a heart attack, and being told that paramedics would not reach you for hours.

These types of scenarios are the reality for rural medicine. A young woman named Taylor Walker of remote Arthur, Nebraska has to face this reality as she is expecting a child but, in order to have checkups about the pain that she is having during the pregnancy with her obstetrician, she must drive four hours round-trip; on a recent visit, another doctor had been on call so she had to make three visits just to see a regular doctor.

This is the reality for citizens of many rural areas. Health care in a rural environment differs significantly from health care in an urban setting, especially in terms of the professionals that are available in the region, as well as their resources and the funding that each hospital receives. Accessibility and availability are two key portions that determine the quality of health care and its administration.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rural residents are often sicker and poorer compared to their urban counterparts. This is especially true during a pandemic like COVID-19; rural regions received less access to health care resources like masks and ventilators, according to the CDC. Additionally, they have higher rates of smoking, obesity and high blood pressure because of the reduced access to preventative care. Most of all, these areas suffer from a deficit of health care workers. However, there are ideas that can be implemented to attract physicians to rural areas—because if we have

more people, we can save more people.

Local health care is only as strong as the medical professionals and resources in the area. According to Georgetown University, the median total health expenditures for rural populations are only slightly higher than those for urban populations: about \$434 compared to the \$418 that urban populations spend. Additionally, the rural residents have to pay more out of pocket than urban residents by six percent. While this number may not seem large, it can add up over time with the accumulating medical bills that one receives.

These numbers are indicative of the inequality of health care costs, which inhibit both facilities and patients. Furthermore, according to Georgetown University, less than 11% of the physicians in the U.S. practice in rural areas, but over 20% of the U.S. population resides in rural areas. This is a great indicator of how few rural residents have access to specialized health care and physicians.

Most physicians choose to practice in the areas where they were trained, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. With multiple hospitals residing in urban areas, most physicians tend not to shift to a rural setting. This prevents rural residents from seeing specialized physicians and receiving specialized procedures, and can lead them to disregard checkups overall.

According to Medical News Today, those aged 65 years and older in rural areas receive less home health care services, in turn resulting in more hospitalizations. This can substantially affect the elderly population because it causes them to have shorter life spans and be in need of greater hospital services, resulting in greater health care costs. This is quite frequent in rural populations; they have a greater need for hospital services because of the lack of primary care physicians in their area.

There is a lack of medical personnel in rural areas, as well as a need to discover a method to bridge the gap between urban and rural health care. One of the major methods that is currently being incorporated and expanded upon is telemedicine. According to the CDC, telemedicine focuses on having the rural physicians, who might have challenges seeing a doctor, receive information and advice from the urban physicians. This would additionally help physicians, as the rural and urban professionals can

collaborate, and the patients would be able to receive more care.

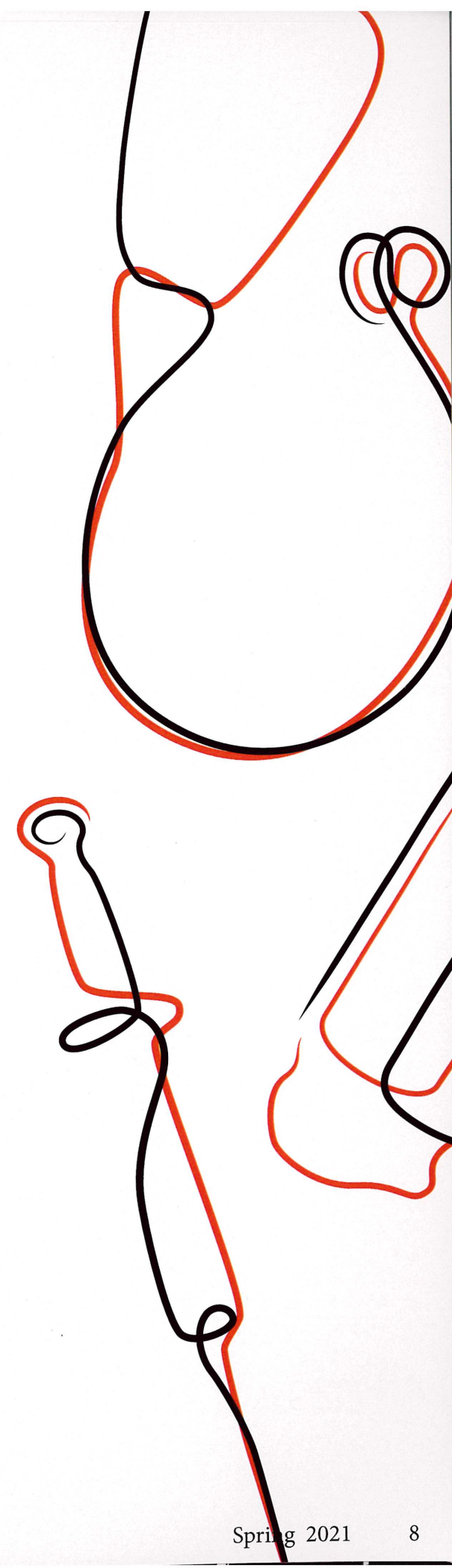
Working in rural health care has its benefits. According to the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC), many physicians are now having their tuition of medical school mostly or completely waived if the physicians decide to practice in rural settings. This is a great advantage for young physicians, especially since the AAMC counts the median debt that the students walk out with from medical school is around \$190,000.

Rural medical personnel also can provide rural patients with a more personalized approach to health care, as the primary care physicians tend to see the same patients frequently and know them based on their geographic region and culture, according to Referral MD. The communities in rural areas are more tight-knit and small. Additionally, according to research done by Howard K. Rabinowitz and Nina P. Paynter in the Journal of the American Medical Association, in rural areas, there is a greater diversity in terms of medical practice as there are a range of physicians in the area and not just a repetition of similar kinds of specialized physicians. Rural physicians benefit from gaining a wide variety of knowledge, as they have to treat patients in multiple ways and not just their specialization. But the benefits for working in rural areas go beyond the office; medical personnel have a better quality of life in rural environments, according to Referral MD.

Abolishing the border between urban and rural health care in terms of medical personnel is an essential move that the U.S. needs to make, because having a greater number of health care workers in various areas lessens the chance of losing more lives.

Health care is a coalition of health care professionals, not a partisan debate. It should not be looked at as a topic to be discussed by politicians but as something given to us by medical professionals. Health care focuses on people, practitioners and patients beyond policy, and should be about humans. With the increase in nurses, physicians and other health care workers, we can save lives and treat people in the long-term.

Medicine should focus on bettering the allocation of resources in different areas of the country, while prioritizing the accessibility that patients have to medical personnel—because the health care workers are the ones that touch the lives of people and bridge the gap between a person and their health.



MAKING MOLEHILLS

adapting to change



Sindhu Manivannan

She/Her

Senior

Neuroscience

How many times have you heard it said that “we are living in unprecedented times,” or “this year has just been crazy,” or, better yet, “welcome to our new normal”? As much as the rhetoric has started to sound repetitive, the unfortunate reality is that it is all true.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the entire world in ways we could never have imagined. A year ago, we would have never thought of not leaving the house without a mask, not sitting down at a restaurant for months, or not seeing the faces of friends nearly as often as we used to. Life has undeniably changed for everyone, and the likely truth that comes along with this fact is that we have changed along with it.

From changes in our speech and mannerisms to changes in our physical selves, it is difficult to say that we are the exact same human beings each year. Especially after a year like 2020, it is nearly impossible to say that we are still the exact same individuals who unknowingly entered the pandemic. While the idea of unconsciously becoming a new person may seem daunting, it's actually not as uncommon as you might think. According to Christopher Soto for National Public Radio, personalities typically do change over time and often result in people becoming more agreeable, conscientious and emotionally resilient.

These changes are not always positive though, and it is possible that everyone may not notice a shift in their personalities. I can feel it in the way I wake up in the morning—sensing yet another day in my bones. I feel it in the way that I am more hyper aware than ever before of how close people are to me, and in the way that I miss the sunshine just a little more as I go another day of not venturing outside. The little things that we do not instantly realize accumulate until, one day, we find the mountain that they have created.

Why does it seem like these mountains are forming for more people now than ever before? The most encompassing (and possibly surprising) answer is trauma. Trauma is defined by the Center for Treatment of Anxiety and Mood Disorders as “a psychological, emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply

distressing or disturbing,” and while COVID-19 might not contain the same violent connotations that are typically associated with trauma, the sudden and drastic changes that have accompanied it fall under the definition. In fact, Ed Prideaux with BBC Future reported in February 2021 that 13.2% of the surveyed general population and 20% of healthcare professionals indicated PTSD symptoms. This is an increase from years past.

In the blink of an eye, the world was placed on lockdown, weeks turned into months between visits with family and distinctions between days disappeared. Every night, news channels reported how many more people had died and, after watching the world seemingly deteriorate every night for almost a year, is it any wonder that people have been traumatized? The world has suddenly turned into a much scarier place than it already was, and when it starts to feel like the outside world is a sea of chaos, it is not hard to see how the trauma can accumulate over the course of a year.

COVID-19 has changed us—so what do we do about it?

The short answer: nothing. Humans are, at our core, beings that are constantly changing. Our ability to constantly morph is part of what helps us adapt to our ever-changing surroundings, and while we may feel nostalgia for the old days, the changes that come with surviving a pandemic are changes that most likely cannot be reversed.

The long answer, on the other hand: everything. A lot of the changes that people are experiencing during quarantine, according to the Cleveland Clinic, include positive ones like spending more time in nature, exercising in different and more frequent ways and changing diets to incorporate healthier components. Christian Jarrett at BBC Future also reports a possible increase in the Michelangelo Effect, a phenomenon wherein our aspirations and ambitions can be more likely attained if we spend sustained time in supported environments (like quarantine with people who believe in you).

Morphing into our pandemic personalities also brings with it the idea of doing things that we have always

OUT OF MOUNTAINS

during COVID-19

wanted to do but never had the chance. While it is true that COVID-19 has brought change and despair around the world, it has also brought many of us the chance to take time to pursue our hobbies and find out what we really enjoy.

People took the time given by quarantine to finally learn how to bake bread, to grow plants and harvest the fruits of their labor, to learn a language that they once thought was unattainable. We danced, we sang, we laughed, we created, we found peace in the still moments and chaos in the loud ones, we learned to love when we did not expect to, and we learned to cry when we finally needed to. We discovered life again—and we did it while the world changed—allowing ourselves to change along with it.

So what do we do with the new life that blooms around us? We do what we have been doing: find our own ways to heal and recover. We learn from our pasts and change our futures with the tools we have at hand. We take the world that has crumbled around us, and we pick ourselves up from the pieces of rubble. We take each other's hands as much as we can and rebuild ourselves from the ground up, finding ourselves yet again while the chaos continues to rage. We find the spots of sunshine and we latch on, bringing our newly rediscovered selves along for the ride.

Without a doubt, everything has changed. The introduction of a pandemic into our lives has transformed everything we know and, with it, we have transformed too. A year later, we are different beings from who we used to be, and we are not alone in our evolution. While symptoms of trauma have increased, our sense of community has not wavered. We have each other to lean on and depend upon as we make our way through our own journeys of healing.

Consider how you have changed during the course of the pandemic. Honor your growth and accept the turbulence. Acknowledge the struggles of your friends and family, and practice patience with coworkers and colleagues. Allowing each other to adapt is an essential and increasingly challenging part of recovery.

One way or another, we will continue to adapt to

the situations that life will throw at us. We will learn to find new ways to keep loving life in the way that we were always meant to. No matter what comes next, no matter how different we may end up being, we will take all of the new parts of ourselves that we have discovered and continue forward with them. As award-winning writer Haruki Murakami says, “When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about.”

Chess' First Move in Gender Equality:

PIECING TOGETHER A MORE UNIFIED COMMUNITY



Jessica Henn

She/Her
Senior
Economics

Over winter break, I had an interesting conversation with my grandfather about women in the workplace. I was employed at the time and, after telling my grandfather what my job consisted of, he made an off-handed remark that it was a shame women had to work nowadays. As someone who is an intense workaholic and needs to be constantly busy, I reacted in the only way I could: utter horror. The idea of not being employed in some way is unimaginable to me. When I asked my grandfather to elaborate on his position that women should not work, he shrugged, made a “back in my day” comment and said that I should find a husband who will work for me.

This conversation understandably bothered me. Although my grandfather did not imply that women are incapable of working, his comment insinuated that women are less valuable in the workforce than men. Yes, he grew up in a different time, but I come from a family of strong women. My great-grandmother worked until she was in her 80s, my grandmother just recently retired and my mother is, as far as I am concerned, a superhero since she worked and raised three children, two of whom were twins, at the same time.

For me, the topic of women working is a resolved one. I worked throughout high school and college to pay my own tuition. I have done everything from food service to machine operating to writing consultations. I cannot quite wrap my head around the idea that people still believe women need to prove their worth before they receive the same awards and respect that men do.

As a woman, I have grown up hearing typical phrases such as “you hit like a girl” or “man up.” Essentially, the English language is saturated with lines that imply that being a girl is not good enough, and that masculinity is the standard. This is especially prevalent not only in the workforce, but also in activities that foster competition, such as athletics or chess.

Due to the recent media attention that chess, a game I enjoy playing recreationally, has been receiving, I want to look at gender disparities in professional chess. It seems like everyone has now watched or heard of Netflix's show “The Queen's Gambit.” In this series, the protagonist

Beth Harmon is a chess prodigy in the 1960s who navigates the world of competitive chess as a woman. The eyes of the world are on her: expecting her to fail, surprised when she succeeds.

Several female chess players have commented on how Beth's story closely relates to their own struggle as women experiencing sexism in chess. Grandmaster (GM) Judit Polgar, the only woman to be ranked in the Top 10 of chess or play for the World Championship, said in a New York Times interview that the show gave her “a sense of déjà vu.” It did a good job of showing the struggles that women face in competitive chess, however Polgar also named one inaccuracy of the show: the support Beth received from her male peers.

Many accounts from women in chess detail the way men in the sport mitigate their accomplishments. Susan Polgar, Judit's older sister, is quoted saying, “When men lose against me, they always have a headache...or things of that kind. I have never beaten a completely healthy man!” Chess is an example of how, frequently, the ability and accomplishments of women in competitions are cheapened. If a woman beats a male competitor, it is common that he claims it is an anomaly, something out of the ordinary. This subordination of women perpetuates the assumption that women do not have the mental capacity to play chess—or any intellectual, aggressive games—well.

According to Dorsa Derakhshani, a Women's GM, International Master (IM) and member of Saint Louis University's chess team, science is one of the best arguments against those who claim women are biologically disadvantaged in chess. Over the years, there have been an alarming number of male GMs who have stated women are inferior to men in chess, including famous players such as Bobby Fischer, Nigel Short and Garry Kasparov.

Additionally, having been a member of both the Iranian and the U.S. Chess Federations, Derakhshani confirmed that sexism in chess is not confined to one part of the world; rather, discrimination against female players stretches internationally and is ingrained in chess culture.

A controversial example of the separation of genders in chess are titles. To be honest, it is difficult for me, as well as people outside of the chess world, to really understand how chess titles and rating work. In extremely basic terms, there are two different categories of titles that can be won in chess: standard World Chess Federation (FIDE) titles that any player can win and women's titles. The highest FIDE title that can be achieved, aside from World Champion, is that of Grandmaster (GM). However, the title of Women's GM (WGM) is of similar rating to the lower

title of International Master (IM). Essentially, the highest title exclusively for women is lower than the second highest standard title.

Like many women chess players, Derakhshani has mixed feelings about women's titles. She believes they are a good way to encourage girls to begin and continue playing chess, however they can create a psychological barrier for women players.

The latter is supported by GM Irina Krush who, like the Polgar sisters, intentionally did not use her WGM title after earning her IM. On women's titles, Krush states, “I don't see their benefit. Women's titles are really a marker of lower expectations.” Krush, like other women players, chose to further her chess career by pursuing the highest title in the game: GM. Through bypassing the women's tournaments, she was able to play higher ranked players and therefore increase her own FIDE ranking. Krush has written that she believes participating in solely women's tournaments discourages women from pursuing a GM title, as it seeks to satisfy them with the lower ranked WGM.

It is argued that the separate titles can reduce the confidence of players and affect their overall performance, which leads to the ultimate question of whether the reason chess is so male dominated is because of nature or nurture. The idea that women are less intellectually talented than men is absurd. There is no evidence to suggest that men are biologically more intellectually talented. The more plausible explanation is that these pervasive beliefs that women do not belong in competitive environments affect the confidence women have in their own abilities and, as Krush states, confidence affects performance.

Women face many subconscious and institutional barriers to equality. From old-fashioned ideas like my grandfather's to the separation of genders in competitive sports like chess, the toxic belief that women somehow have less to contribute than men is perpetrated. Though I have never played chess outside of a recreational setting, hearing anyone insinuate that my accomplishments are a result of chance would be both insulting and discouraging.

It is disheartening to know that gender inequality is so starkly present in one of the world's most respected games. Many of the biases present in chess are a result of misinformation: the belief that women are intellectually inferior in competitive settings is feeding into cycle of gender

discrimination.

But in the grand scheme of American society, do chess titles really matter? I would say yes because, just like anything, it is not just the titles. The separate competitions and level of recognition of women chess players represents not only an international but a national subordination of women. We live in a world where the sexist belief that anything associated with women, even “playing like a girl,” is an insult in recreation, the workplace and our personal lives. The devaluation of a WGM is yet another way to exploit and subordinate women and their accomplishments.

In the United States, women encompass nearly half of the workforce. In addition, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 76% of teachers in the U.S. are women. Women are the greatest source of education in the country. Why, then, is there any doubt concerning our intellectual abilities? Why is it a bad thing to “play like a girl” if women are the backbone of our workforce and education system?

There is a common saying that behind every great man is a great woman. This phrase is meant to be empowering, but I have never liked it much. It always bothers me that women are seen as a support: that no matter how talented you are as a woman, you are just a side character in someone else's success. You are the headache they had to lose against.

This is where the change should begin. Stereotype that subordinate women perpetuate the assumption that women do not have the mental capacity to work for themselves, play chess or engage in any intellectual behavior. The idea that men are biologically superior needs to be taken out of circulation—and chess should be the first move.

Change starts with children; Young girls should be taught to be confident and empowered and that they are just as capable as their male peers—whether on the board or off. In competitive environments like chess and the workplace, women should be given the same opportunities to succeed; their accomplishments should not be brushed off or reduced to coincidence.

Just like the queen on a chess board, women are powerful. We are educators and fighters. Society is built on the backs of women lifting others up; it is time society returned the favor and bridge the gender gap. Or, at least, put sexism in check.

FIDE Titles

Title	Minimum Required FIDE Elo	Eligibility
Grandmaster (GM)	2500	Anyone
International Master (IM)	2400	Anyone
Woman Grandmaster (WGM)	2300	Women only
FIDE Master (FM)	2300	Anyone
Woman International Master (WIM)	2200	Women only
Candidate Master (CM)	2200	Anyone
Woman FIDE Master (WFM)	2100	Women only
Woman Candidate Master (WCM)	2000	Women only



Satya Sanapati
She/Her
Junior
Neuroscience & Math

Today's Americans are no stranger to the plaguing opioid epidemic. In 2019 alone, 10.1 million people misused prescription opioids and 1.6 million people had an opioid use disorder in the previous year, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). From 2000 to 2015, more than half a million people died of an overdose, and currently 91 people a day die from overdoses of prescription or illicit opioids, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Statistics like these are prevalent when discussing the epidemic, as they strikingly demonstrate the vast number of individuals engaging in opioid misuse. However, while we have a lot of numbers surrounding mortality and overdoses in adults, there is little attention paid to how the effects of the opioid epidemic carry over to a much more vulnerable population: children.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Cote, the Chief Health Officer for the National Institute of Children's Health Quality, lack of resources, such as education, money and access to mental health care and alternate pain treatment

"predisposes individuals to receiving and misusing addictive prescriptions. And then lack of access to health care and treatment leads to continued opioid-use and continued poverty. Children are neglected or removed from their homes, often losing their

parents permanently. Far too often, those children become the victims of this troubling cycle."

According to research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics, the number of children entering foster care due to parental drug use has doubled between the years of 2000 and 2017. The HHS's Administration on Children and Families reported parental substance use was cited in 32% of foster placements, which is a rise of 10% from 2005.

Having to leave home and enter foster care is a stressful situation for any child. The process can be confusing and may leave children to struggle with several issues, such as blaming themselves and feeling guilty, unwanted and uncertain about their future. According to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, about 30% of children in foster care have severe emotional, behavioral or developmental problems.

This is compounded for children who are placed in foster care due to a parent's opioid-use disorder, as they face unique and complex traumatic experiences that require special psychological treatment. There are reports of children finding their parents when they overdosed and were tasked with being responsible for finding help or, in worse cases, left to watch a parent die. In these situations, the children are often wondering if and how they could have saved their parents, unfairly placing blame and guilt on themselves. JAMA reports indicate teens who have been a part of these situations can develop substance use disorders themselves.

The Center for Traumatic Stress in Children and

Adolescents at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh has conducted research that shows the promising effects using Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) to help children process and recover from troubling experiences related to their parents' opioid abuse. TF-CBT for children can involve learning how to process and better understand their trauma, through coping mechanisms to effectively counter the negative feelings and thoughts that arise in response to trauma. Overall, TF-CBT results in a greater ability to control trauma-related symptoms, as children who underwent this treatment were significantly less likely to have their foster placement disrupted.

Other treatments of interest involve outpatient or residential services that incorporate the child's biological parents into the treatment itself, allowing their relationship to be supported. This kind of treatment stimulates a positive attachment between the child and parent. The Ohio State University found that, when treated together, both the parent and child were less likely to use substances than if they were treated individually. Further, children were also less likely to develop behavioral problems, depression or anxiety.

While there are established effective psychological methods to help children and parents cope with substance abuse and promote healthier behavior, there are still many children with needs that still must be addressed. Stigma and fear of judgement are common barriers that keep families from seeking help. These obstacles often arise from inaccurate ideas that addiction is a moral failing and ignores the fact that it is a treatable disease.

Beyond deterring people with substance disorders from seeking treatment, stigmas stereotype these individuals and can lead others to feel fear, anger or an unwillingness to interact with people who have a substance use disorder. These stigmas extend beyond social situations and can even be carried by health care providers, whose perceptions can undermine the care they give.

Changing the stigma associated with substance-use disorders can greatly improve the lives of those who use opioids and their children. This begins with simple actions, such as using language that reflects individuals as people.

People-first language, such as "person with substance

use disorder" or "person in recovery" maintains the concept that these individuals are human beings beyond their conditions. Language that uses conditions as identifiers—such as "addict" or "user"—defines these individuals as inseparable from their condition and carries negative connotations.

Destigmatizing can extend to policymaking. Policies which help to instate treatment or work to remove stigma can provide these families with better help. Such policies could be programs that opt for supervised treatment rather than incarceration for parents with substance use disorders. Incorporating compassion into how we support people who use drugs can help them, and especially their children, to maintain meaningful, autonomous and healthy lives.

Intergenerational Recovery

Treating the Children of the Opioid Crisis

pick up the Slack



Swathy Karthikeyan

She/Her
Sophomore
Neuroscience

"Black Lives Matter. Anti-racist. Systemic change. Inequity."

On May 5, 2020, I had not only seen, but also used these words more in a 24 hour span than I had in my entire life. All of a sudden, these phrases seemed to be at the forefront of everyone's vocabulary. Throughout the day, millions of people across the globe were responding in outrage and advocating for change through social media. Petition links were passed around, educational videos were shared and informative graphics were posted on nearly everyone's Instagram story. But what was so unique about May 5 that sparked this widespread fury?

On this day, footage depicting the murder of Ahmaud Arbery was released to the public; it showed the innocent runner being brutally chased down and murdered by two white men. The video spread like a wildfire. Almost overnight, everyone seemed to have been exposed to what had happened. Unfortunately, in the United States, the news of a Black man being wrongfully killed is nothing new. Yet, what was notably different was the response. Social media was wielded as a tool to mass circulate petitions calling for the police department to hold the men responsible for Arbery's death accountable. While the footage was released nearly four months after the murder, the men were arrested in nearly two days. The collective voices across social media platforms were unable to be drowned out or ignored. Online efforts for justice have existed in the past, but this one took over the news and delivered results.

This was, I believe, a critical moment in 2020 that reignited the flurry of social media activism. Infographics detailing social justice issues, petitions urging concrete action and links to educate people were found all over Instagram stories and Snapchat filters. Caught up in the frenzied nature of everything, I found myself among these people, avidly sharing posts I found meaningful or placing a petition link in my bio.

Months later, though the movement is still as crucial as ever and there are still countless issues that need to be addressed; I find myself wondering how much reliance we should place on social media to educate ourselves and find ways to take action.

Activism has taken many forms over the years. We have witnessed mass protests, sit-ins and numerous activist campaigns advocating for change. More recently, social media activism has started to become a more prominent means of enacting change, specifically amongst younger generations. This was notably

witnessed during the spring and summer of 2020 with the wrongful murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, as well as throughout the evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The easiest benefit of social media activism is the awareness it brings to issues that have gone largely unaddressed or unnoticed for too long. Hyejoon Rim, assistant professor of journalism and mass communication at University of Minnesota, and Keon Youngpark, PhD candidate of public communication at Syracuse University, describe how social media is particularly important for reaching "inactive publics," otherwise known as those who have a low level of knowledge or involvement in a particular issue. People in these groups gain exposure and a better understanding of social justice issues or current advocacy efforts through the simple act of scrolling through their social media feed. Without social media, many would have likely gone unaware of these issues.

Moreover, BBC journalist Richard Fisher finds social media activism serves as an avenue for people to demonstrate support through liking, commenting, sharing or accessing a link of a particular post. Through these means, action can be taken by millions almost instantaneously: a feat impossible to achieve without utilizing social media.

Viewing social media activism as a stepping stone for educating oneself can also be beneficial. Topics like redlining, school system funding, felony disenfranchisement and mass incarceration can be difficult to understand but, with the influx of social media infographics, they can be explored by anyone with a social media account. This was prominently seen last summer with the viral Instagram account @soyouwanttotalkabout, which provides condensed explanations of multiple social justice topics in a 10-slide post. Vox News's Terry Nguyen details how this format is an easy way for anyone to learn about a variety of issues with the simple tap of their fingers, leading the account to go from a few thousand followers to surpassing a million.

The unfortunate truth, however, is that many people's activism ends when they turn off their phone. When the hype of posting has died down, thoughts of advocating for long term change die along with them. When the phrase "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) was coined nearly seven years ago by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, it was extremely controversial. Priya Elan, editor for The Guardian, details how L'OREAL Paris

dropped their spokeswoman Munroe Bergdorf for her outspoken support of BLM, yet in 2020, L'OREAL posted a statement in solidarity with the movement. Here we see the pitfalls of social media activism: when fear of being called out or "cancelled" overrides genuine support or understanding for the cause. What we see here is "slacktivism," a term so increasingly ubiquitous that the Oxford Dictionary has a definition for it: "the practice of supporting a political or social cause by means such as social media or online petitions, characterized as involving very little effort or commitment."

Similarly, we see this on the individual level. Over 28 million black squares were posted by Instagram users on what was known as "Blackout Tuesday," according to Paul Monckton, senior editor for Forbes. The eagerness to show that, like everyone else, they supported BLM pushed many to post. Like with larger corporations, the fear of being criticized or left out drove several to participate in "Blackout Tuesday." Predictably, these posts did not end racism, rather drowned out Black voices, resources and posts by flooding the BLM hashtag with black squares. If 28 million people were advocating for BLM on a consistent basis beyond the black squares, we could be living in a new world. But unfortunately, that just is not the case.

In The Journal of Consumer Science, Kirk Kristofferson, Katherine White and John Peloza explain how the method an individual uses to support an organization can indicate if they are likely to provide subsequent, more meaningful support in the future. When an individual's token of support for a cause is largely public, it can lead to a lesser chance of agreeing to provide meaningful support for the cause when requested by the organization. If an individual's first interaction with activism involves making a very public online demonstration of support for a cause—such as liking or retweeting a post—they are less likely to respond to sustained calls for support from the organization.

Awareness only goes so far; it must be supplemented with a drive to create genuine change. We eagerly post the most recent infographic, but tend to shy away from seeking the work required to create the change and end these injustices. Signing the latest petition circulating is only the first step in a long journey to inciting change.

Jason Del Gandio, professor of communication and social movements at Temple University, explains how signing

petitions needs to be coupled with further action to enact major change. This involves, among other methods, protests, phone calls and letters to representatives. Awareness must be paired with action. The drawback from having everything accessible through social media, is that anything that cannot be accessed quickly is not as popular. However, these types of actions—concrete steps beyond awareness—are exactly what need more attention and have the most potential to truly change the story of injustice in our country.

I can do better with my engagement with activism. When I look to my engagement in social causes over the summer compared to now, it is embarrassing how stark the contrast is. Books I planned to read, documentaries I intended to watch and organizations I wanted to get involved with have slowly turned into a list for "someday." My urgency rises and falls in sync as the newest injustices come to light. The point is not to chastise or call out people. The truth is we all want to see our world be and do better when it comes to instilling equity. We just need to be willing to educate ourselves and be more intentional with the actions we take. Poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou summed it up best by saying: "When you know better, you do better."

Our society cannot afford to become reactive; we must remain proactive. We seek change and express our disappointment, but only after a tragedy has already occurred. We must have patience and productivity in mind, as we resist blaming ourselves and begin searching for better ways to evoke change. Carrying the momentum of a movement to enact sustainable change is challenging, but essential. The year 2020 has taught us that unification and a desire for change can do wonders, but the effect of concrete actions cannot be overstated. We have potential to make strides that have never before been made if we take our activism beyond screens and bring it to the outside world.

Spoken Spaces:

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN EXCLUDING PLACES



Lexi Guffey
She/Her
Junior
Sociology

With a constantly changing and increasingly technological reality, we are continuously looking into an incredibly interconnected world and trying to find a place within it. The ways these spaces are created, filled, opened, gatekept and divided is often not done overtly. The nuances and subtleties that permeate everyday life dictate how and when we interact with society. Language is a key force behind this, as it acts as a connotative indicator of where people are and are not welcome. Countless aspects of daily life are impacted by the boundaries and expectations enforced by language, but this is most clearly seen through the gender in the workplace, discussions of race and the experiences of people in the LGBTQ+ community.

The experience of women in the workplace is one that has been burdened by gendered expectations, glass ceilings, wage gaps and inequality. Even as progress has been made, language casts a normative shadow that dictates how women are treated and expected to act. This divisive language often takes the form of patronization and tone policing, according to equalrights.org.

It is not uncommon for women to be referred to with diminishing, paternalistic terms like “honey,” “babe” or “sweetie,” even in professional contexts. By contrast, their male counterparts are not subject to this kind of dialogue. The use of these terms is not innocuous — they enforce an

unspoken hierarchy that subverts the qualifications, expertise and authority of women.

In the workplace, even when women are not undermined by others, they are expected to undermine themselves. Tone policing is undeniably common in the way women interact with society, especially in career and academic settings. In meetings or dialogue, women soften their approach to conversation, punctuating sentences with, “I’m not sure if that makes sense,” “I think that...” or “I’m sorry.” This reluctance to assert themselves is a direct result of what would happen if they did; women who act and speak in the same way as men are often labeled as “bitchy” or “domineering” instead of “confident” or “direct.”

Women are expected to watch their tone in professional emails as well, softening their messages with phrases like “could you please,” “it looks like,” “thank you so much” and an excessive use of exclamation points. Without these fillers, they are often perceived as aggressive or hostile, while men using the same language would not be subject to those same judgments. These double standards created and enforced by language force women to undermine themselves, which in turn reinforces the gender inequalities in upward mobility within workplace settings.

These subtleties in the way people use language bleed into how others are spoken about. While racism is not always overt, it is hyper-present in coded language. By coding racist language, the phrasing is softened but the meaning remains and perpetuates prejudice throughout society according to neadjustice.org.

Consider the casual ways we code geographic areas with racist language. When someone describes a part of the city with higher Black populations, they might unfairly use words like “sketchy,” “dangerous” or “underdeveloped” in their justification for avoiding the area. In the media, Black men are often referred to as “thugs” or “criminals” while their white counterparts are not labeled the same.

The Black Lives Matter protests offer a stark example of

this—over the summer, the media focused on the “looting” from protestors depicted as violent criminals. But in January, when there was an insurrection at the Capitol, conservative news outlets applauded Trump expressing his love and asking the rioters to go home in peace. Language is a key way that prejudice and bias are perpetuated, indicating the deep roots of power structures that keep oppressed groups from reaching equality.

The use of language as a tool for oppression is evident not only in nuance, but in silence. In the LGBTQ+ community, the history of exclusion from the church and hatred from Christians hangs heavy. However, marriage equality and an undeniable growth in acceptance has shed light on the exclusion of queer voices and phrases from mainstream culture. Now, the continued use of a language shared only by the community contributes to their own erasure, as it allows straight people to ignore their experience. While nuances in language actively contribute to inequality, language has vast potential to work toward inclusion, and this is already occurring across disciplines. It has become common in many spaces, particularly in academia, to ask for and share pronouns. In addition to this, gender neutral terms are becoming more commonplace, as “guests,” “friends” and “partner” replace “ladies and gentlemen,” “guys and girls” and “girlfriend and boyfriend.” While these differences might not be impactful for cisgender people, the omission of gendered terms and increased respect for pronouns creates an inclusive space for trans, nonbinary and gender non-conforming people.

The emergence of person-first language is another example of the weight language carries. Instead of addressing or referring to someone with their diagnosis first, such as an “autistic person,” person-first language implies just that: prioritizing the personage by using “person with autism.” This shift emphasizes

the dignity and humanity of people with disabilities.

Inclusive language like this is seen along racial lines as well, as terms like “POC” or “BIPOC” for “people of color” and “Black and Indigenous people of color” have become more common.

These terms are more inclusive and racially sensitive, and create a respectful space for conversations about race.

The push for inclusivity surrounding language has made great strides—English is constantly evolving and the desire to approach it with sensitivity in itself is a mark of progress. In doing this, however, the use of inclusive language can quickly shift to virtue signaling; instead of committing to sustained action, people use the “right” language and end their activism there. But using “POC” simply is not the same as volunteering, donating to mutual aid or working on becoming more anti-racist.

Language should be the culmination of a larger body of work—inclusive word choice is a conduit for connection with previously excluded people. Language bridges the gap between individuals’ work on personal mindsets of inclusion and the way that this work is communicated with others.

As members of the next generation, it may feel like the weight of the world falls on our shoulders to make things right, especially in our country. It can get overwhelming, like we are suddenly in charge of so many lives that were made unbeknownst to us beforehand. However, as people proactively seek knowledge and experiences—just trying to make a difference in our world—I know that we are not alone in our efforts; by working together we can rise.

Therefore, in order to better advocate for our country's needs, it is time we start identifying people as human beings first rather than just labels. We first must begin to recognize the humanity of undocumented immigrants in the United States of America. They are widely underrepresented in the official resources and programs made available to those who live here. This creates evolving issues that need to be addressed and resolved before our next census count.

It does not take an economist or mathematician to acknowledge the inaccuracy of the U.S. census in terms of counting the needs of all those living in America, even with different citizenship statuses. Undocumented immigrants not getting counted in the official census is an important issue that illuminates the socioeconomic divide and disparities in healthcare and services offered in our nation.

It is important to continue spreading awareness about the significance of the census and what it will mean in a post-COVID-19 society. As outlined by the Constitution, the census is only administered once every ten years, meaning that we only get one shot to get it right every decade and ensure that enough resources and organized action plans are put in place.

The official U.S. government website regarding the census defines the operation as “a comprehensive count of every resident in the United States... The data collected



Maria Cieslarczyk
She/Her
Junior
Communication

by the census determines the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives (a process called apportionment) and is also used to distribute billions in federal funds to local communities.”

The U.S. census is the largest peacetime operation conducted in the U.S., and requires years of research and planning to ensure that it is a successful and accurate count of the population.

In his television show last year, comedian and commentator John Oliver emphasized the significance of filling out the census, even if it appears to be a daunting task. In a Time Magazine article regarding Oliver's show, it is declared that, “Census data helps determine Congressional representation and is used as a basis to distribute federal funds, and businesses use census data to decide where to open new branches. The census was considered so critical to the founding fathers that it's the sixth sentence in the U.S. Constitution.”

The impacts of getting an inaccurate census count can be dangerous and even lead to deadly occurrences. Inaccurately gathering census information affects how a particular geographic area can readily respond to a crisis or offer resources to its people in times of need. If undocumented immigrants are not counted, then needs of an area are underestimated.

Excluding people and their children based on citizenship status causes them to suffer and is harmful to the whole population. Undercounting the residents of a district by discouraging undocumented immigrants from completing the census restricts access opportunities for those living in a particular area. For example, counting the census wrong for a specific location in a city can cause an area to be underfunded; this can lead to only one hospital in an area where two are needed. Consequently, both undocumented immigrants and citizens all suffer the effects

of underfunding.

Former President Donald Trump attempted to exclude people in the official count of the 2020 census, and we must ensure that never happens in the future for the sake of our nation. The Trump administration, according to The Washington Post, attempted to include a question regarding citizenship on the U.S. census in 2020. Even though information obtained by the census is only intended for data collection, Trump actions were seen as a method to discourage the undocumented immigrant's participation in the census. This was a divisive move that irrationally caused fear, excluded people and built a metaphorical border between citizens and non-citizens. Though struck down by the Supreme Court and subsequently not included on the census, this question was undoubtedly an act of intimidation and bias.

Pursuing policies to make undocumented immigrants less likely to respond impacts how a county receives federal funding for public services, including everything from health care to education, and only produces more harm than good for all of us.

However, with the U.S. Senate now being 50-50 in terms of Republicans and Democrats, there is more talk of

conducting the census in a just and collaborative manner.

Better ways to focus on encouraging everyone to fill out the census include the use of the internet to increase self-response and other methods designed to boost productivity. As well, steps can be taken to ensure that undocumented immigrants—who are loved, validated, worthwhile and essential humans to this nation—are counted fairly and fully.

All in all, undocumented immigrants are still using our roads, our libraries and our resources, so if the census does not include them, then the government does not have the knowledge to make sure that resources are made available to the people that need it.

It is time that these invisible numbers are brought to light; it is time that people get counted for being just, well, people. Americans come with an assortment of different needs—whether or not they are documented. Counting people and using inclusivity as well as mathematics to include everyone living in America is not a political issue, but a human rights one.

NOT JUST NUMBERS

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRATION AND THE U.S. CENSUS



Riya Shah

She/Her

First-Year

Public Health & Biology

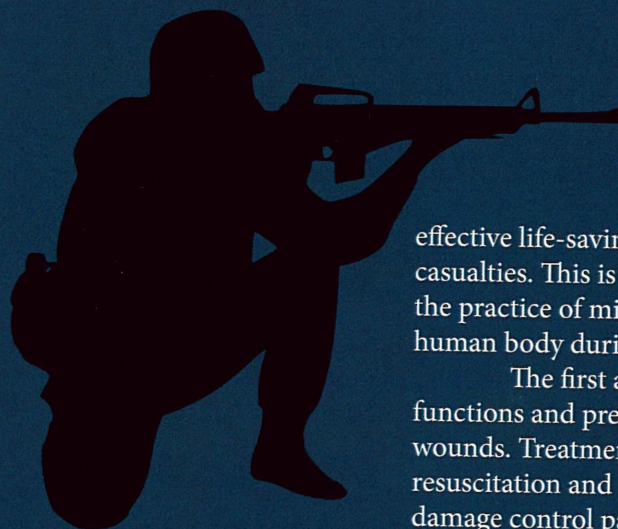
Content Warning: Suicide

A young clinician in the military experienced a fellow soldier succumb to his injuries on the battlefield. Not understanding how to approach the concept of death, the man fell to the soldier's side, unable to uphold his duties. As the clinician wept, four other fellow soldiers lost their lives because they were not given proper attention and treatment. The young man succumbed to the concept known as "diseases of despair," something that remains unaddressed in the military.

BODY BAGS

Diseases of despair refer to premature deaths through suicide, overdose or alcoholic liver disease in communities plagued by poor social or economic conditions. According to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, an average of 17.6 veterans commit suicide every day. In military environments, this premature mortality of soldiers can have an addition and profoundly negative impact on the peers of the deceased. The deaths of fellow soldiers from diseases of despair can put emotional weight on survivors, and individuals affected with social despair tend to gravitate toward death prematurely, themselves.

In an article titled "Damage Control Interdisciplinarity: An Antidote to Death Despair in Military Medicine," Dr. Erica Jeschke explains what "diseases of despair" entail, and how effective interventions are needed to reduce preventable deaths. A common misconception is that "diseases of despair" are limited to individuals; however, this concept can be applied to networks or communities of people. When members in a community are exposed to a grievous event, such as



witnessing the death of a fellow soldier, the emotional, behavioral and biological despair of the community can rise, thus further raising individuals' despair. Soldiers are at great risk for "socially-mediated mechanisms" that spread diseases of despair, according to Jeshcke. An example would be the idea of social contagion, or the diffusion of emotions, behavior and biology in social contexts. After the death of a fellow soldier, despair-related emotions can diffuse easily amongst peers at a military base, who live, eat, train and relax together. In this environment, overcoming the loss of a soldier from a disease of despair is incredibly challenging. In order for soldiers to move forward from a painful loss, the way that military medical personnel handle these preventable diseases and their subsequent deaths must be shifted.

Jeshcke highlights the challenges of addressing death despair in combat casualty management,

demonstrating how to reduce preventable deaths with combat medicine.

Interventions to reduce preventable deaths are not a new concept for the military. In the past 20 years, military medical research has sought to create effective life-saving adaptations in order to reduce these casualties. This is shown in damage control medicine, or the practice of minimizing major trauma inflicted on the human body during combat.

The first adaptation was to stabilize the body functions and prevent any ongoing bleeding through the wounds. Treatment would involve intensive care unit resuscitation and surgical interventions. This "combat damage control paradigm" was used in Afghanistan and Iraq through "global aero-evacuation capabilities" that allowed for efficient evacuation on the battlefield and transcontinental transportation through surgical facilities before arriving at a definitive medical care location. This adaptive use of medicine resulted in a 92% survival rate for soldiers who suffered from injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to Jeshcke. Further adaptive interventions could help address "diseases of despair," but there is much misconception surrounding the topic.

Jeshcke argues that the Defense Health Agency (DHA) should do interdisciplinary research on "strategic second-order organizational change" in order to prepare for future large-scale combat operations (LSCO). In essence, doing more research on diseases of despair can help develop more productive health policies and safer medical training.

This is especially important for soldiers who experience events with a high number of casualties, such as war or genocide intervention.

Jeshcke urges for more research on death despair in the military by developing a team of experts in political science, anthropology and history to collaborate with military strategists and medical experts. The team would bring forth research-based solutions that would shift the expectations of how military medical personnel handle death, dying and diseases of despair in soldiers.

After doing initial research and advocating to military officials, Jeshcke noticed that some still do not understand the importance of doing research and placing effective measures to reduce preventable deaths by diseases of despair. She noticed two main counter-arguments against the research: first, the idea that clinicians do not need to be trained to deal with death, and humans can figure out how to deal with death if exposed to it. Jeshcke argues that

save the lives of the soldiers during times of mass casualties, there will be more deaths due to diseases of despair and inability to cope. Emotional borders need to be taken down and a bridge needs to fill the gap between the reality of the military and the reality of death.

In their poem "For Eli," poet Andrea Gibson discusses post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide and the military. Gibson laments that "not all casualties come home in body bags." These wounds need care too.

Military Prevention for Diseases of Despair

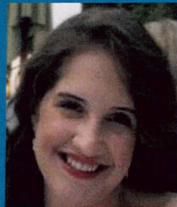
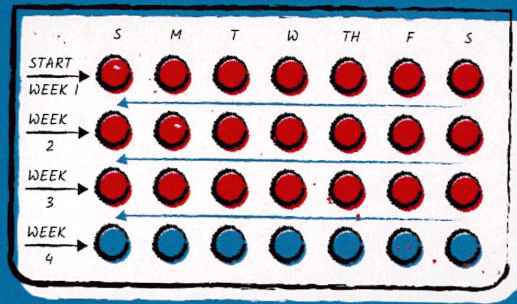
clinicians would not be able to make sense of death when overwhelmed with it during a time of mass casualties. If expectations are not shifted to focus on life and death care, in times of mass casualties, they will not be able to act fast or effectively to save lives.

Another counter-argument is the belief that it is impossible to predict the future and figure out what the unknowns are; we simply do not know when our military's next mass-casualty event will be. Jeshcke argues that while it may be impossible to predict the specifics of the future, it is incumbent upon the military strategists to anticipate future military involvements and mitigate the harm they have on soldiers. Defense leaders are tasked with preparing for future large-scale combat operations where there are mass casualties. Not knowing the specifics of the future is not a reason to resist preparation.

More research on this subject is needed by military officials to properly develop interventions to reduce the preventable deaths that may occur from diseases of despair. Already, counterinsurgency operation (COIN) paradigms have led to damage control interventions where injured soldiers are taken quickly off the battlefield to advanced definitive medical care. This paradigm reduced the number of preventable deaths that could have occurred; however, this paradigm does not address death and dying.

The majority of military medicine and research has been focused on saving lives and not accepting death. If clinicians are just focused on continuously attempting to





Lilly Adams
She/Her
Junior
Political Science

*"You wined me and dined me
When I was your girl
Promised if I'd be your wife
You'd show me the world
But all I've seen of this old world
Is a bed and a doctor bill
I'm tearin' down your brooder house
'Cause now I've got the pill."*

These are lyrics from Loretta Lynn's 1975 country song, "The Pill," which celebrated women's autonomous access to birth control. Despite much of what is seen now in more contemporary country music, the genre used to be about the plights of rural and working class people and, at times could be very anti-establishment. Unique, bold and disruptive, Lynn's heartfelt song shows how political views go beyond cultural stereotypes. We could all use some of this tune today.

In late February, Texas was hit by a devastating snowstorm that resulted in a power grid failure, leading 57 people to die from hypothermia, carbon monoxide poisoning and failure of medical equipment, according to the Texas Tribune. Some of the immediate online responses to Texas's situation were jokes.

People made fun of Texans for having the audacity to ask for help, since some of their Republican officials have routinely endorsed the Lone Star state's secession from the union. Critical commenters said that Texans should try "pulling themselves up by the bootstraps" that they love so much, stop complaining and vote Democrat next time. Voices online said that it was hard to feel sorry for people that were experiencing the consequences of their own Republican government. All of a sudden, the public service-supporting, NPR-listening, Bernie Sanders-loving liberals

online were mocking the deaths and hardships of their fellow Americans.

This kind of discourse fails to consider voting rights issues, such as gerrymandering and suppression, that disenfranchise liberal voters of color to make predominantly conservative, white states, according to Texas Monthly. Ignoring Texans' cries for help ignores disenfranchised people, but also the 46% of Texans that did in fact vote Democrat in the 2020 election. Withholding your progressive politics from these voters—poor, working class and people of color—makes it seem as if they only matter if they live in certain states.

Sticking to your guns can be challenging. Candance Owens is a well-known conservative commentator who often talks about why she, as a Black woman, is a conservative. She trends every so often because of her often controversial statements, and the responses can often go a bit far. There are always a slew of people who say racist and sexist things to her when they disagree with something she says. In the comments section of her Twitter, this ranges from racial slurs to telling her to "go back to the kitchen." To protest Owens's own internalized racism, commenters use racism: a confusing cycle.

It is easy to care about social issues such as racism and sexism online, but you cannot let all of it go out the window when someone does not agree with you politically. This kind of attitude toward activism is unsustainable and is conditional on politics, not policy. It implies that only certain people are allowed to qualify for basic human rights.

Loretta Lynn's poetic lyrics are a powerful example that not all "country" people, singers or voters think and act the same way. Take a listen to the plurality of voices and opinions in the genre—you might learn a thing or two about politics, policy and how to be a sustainable protestor.

THE REALITY of Pregnancy for BIPOC Parents



Beyza Cardakli
She/Her
First-Year
Neuroscience

On January 28, 2017, just three weeks after giving birth, Dr. Shalon Irving died in her home. While pregnant, Irving had kept a close watch on her health, as a blood clotting disorder created daily discomfort and pain. She gave birth safely at 37 weeks, but her blood pressure was still irregular. Despite repeatedly returning to her physicians, Irving collapsed just five hours after a medical visit. She died at 36.

Irving did everything right in her pregnancy. She visited her obstetrician and created a descriptive plan for before, during and after her pregnancy. She took her medication and all the necessary precautions concerning her lifestyle. By all accounts, Dr. Shalon Irving should have survived.

Irving was a human and parent that the healthcare system failed—but she is not alone. Heather Dobbs nearly died from a hemorrhage, and doctors were forced to take drastic measures and remove her uterus. Heather Lavender lost her son after intense blood loss, and a hysterectomy had to be performed. Candice Williams suffered a heart attack five days after giving birth. While at the hospital, the doctors diagnosed the attack as spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD) and focused on the prevention for another attack rather than operate. Anner Porter brought her symptoms of numbness and exhaustion to her OB-GYN, only to be advised to intake more iron. Two days later, her heart failed, and she almost died. To this day, Porter suffers from heart complications. These testimonies, recounted by National Public Radio and ProPublica, show the pervasive problem that is plaguing parents across the nation.

Although the general American public would like to think that maternal deaths by racism are a thing of the past, the United States has increasing and apparent inequalities. There is an epidemic surrounding pregnancy and reproductive health care for women of color in America. A Black woman is 243% more likely to die from maternal causes than a white woman, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). From 2007 to 2016, the CDC also found that the pregnancy-related mortality ratio for Black women with a college degree was 5.2 times greater than white college-educated women. Furthermore, diseases such as hemorrhage, cardiomyopathy and hypertensive disorders are more likely to kill pregnant Black and Indigenous women than white women.

These statistics and stories provide the obvious conclusion that Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC) are facing a

greater chance of maternal mortality than their white counterparts. It is important to remember that this issue is held up by systemic racism, and that toppling it down will require a nationwide breakdown of various barriers that prevent BIPOC from receiving adequate care. There are multiple possible solutions to this problem, all of which will be great endeavors but necessary to implement. Adequate health insurance is vital for pregnant women. Prenatal care and prevention techniques can inhibit the majority of maternal deaths. The American Journal of Public Health found that from 2014 to 2016, states that expanded Medicaid saw infant mortality rates drop. Thirty-nine states, including D.C., have accepted Medicaid expansion. Advocates say it's time for the remaining 12 to follow suit. Increased access to healthcare can begin to break down the system that allows BIPOC mothers to be mistreated throughout their pregnancies.

Another solution is increasing access to reproductive healthcare, specifically in underserved communities. Reproductive healthcare is not just birth control and abortion—it also includes cancer screenings, family planning counseling, sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, prenatal care and post-natal care. However, women of color in poverty do not always have access to such services, which feeds into the maternal mortality rate. According to the Center for American Progress, "planned pregnancies are associated with better health outcomes than unplanned pregnancies." Therefore, it is critical that more state and federal funds go to increasing the quantity and quality of reproductive healthcare clinics and hospitals.

Like the solution of increasing funding for reproductive healthcare, there are many ways to decrease and diminish the probability of racial prejudice in the medical field. One such way is to increase employment of physicians and nurses from the same racial and cultural background as patients. For this to happen, however, we must get rid of the systematic barriers that prevent BIPOC from entering higher education, such as student loans and poorly-funded public schools.

Another way to diminish racial biases in healthcare is to train medical professionals to be patient-centered. This can be done in medical school and during residency programs. Lowering the rate of racial and cultural insensitivity is one of the ways to lower the rates of maternal mortality in the U.S.

When looking at the best possible solution for high rates of maternal mortality among BIPOC, it is important to ask which solution will not only decrease the statistics, but also address the systemic racism and history that have kept the rates so high. Without concrete legislation, most efforts will be in vain. Action from the state and federal levels can implement multiple solutions that can save multiple lives. However, it is important to match training and discussion with laws and regulations. In order for America to move forward and protect BIPOC parents and children, change must be executed immediately.

Lone Star, Loretta Lynn and Learning to Fight Right

A Neglected Nation:

THE INFLUENCE OF WATER POVERTY ON NAVAJO HEALTH



Mary Collum

She/Her

Junior

Anthropology

In an area roughly the size of West Virginia, Navajo Nation is facing a crisis that many Americans cannot conceptualize: water poverty. According to Science Directly, water poverty is defined as a “situation where a nation or region cannot afford the cost of sustainable clean water to all people at all times.”

Insecure access to water poses a significant problem. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), this can have many impacts on a community, including disrupting agriculture and increasing risk of diseases. It also can make seemingly small, daily tasks like brushing your teeth, cooking, washing your hands and cleaning your clothes impossible.

It is reported by CBS News that 40% of the 173,000 Navajo Nation residents lack access to clean, safe drinking water. Additionally, one in three Navajos do not have a sink or toilet in their home. In the U.S. according to the WHO, 99% of the population has access to clean water. How is it that the disparity is so large between communities in the United States? The history of the Navajo and the U.S. government is key to understanding this.

The U.S. government has signed 370 treaties with numerous Indigenous nations, the Navajo included, from 1778 to 1871 alone. As history repeats itself, countless more have been signed since then. According to the National Public Radio, “More than 150 years ago, the Navajo and many other tribes signed treaties with the federal government giving up their land in exchange for funding of things like housing, infrastructure and health care. But for decades that hasn’t happened.” As a result, Navajo Nation faces food deserts, an unemployment rate around 70%, substance abuse and poor infrastructure.

Another major result of these treaties that led

to the water poverty public health crisis in the Navajo community was, according to WHO, the reallocation of the water and irrigation systems in the American southwest. Water that was once accessible to farms and other systems in Navajo communities was relocated to source housing developments and golf courses outside of the reservation, leaving the Navajo, who have been farmers since before colonization, without water. Today, finding clean water on the reservation is a challenge.

Residents of Navajo Nation gain access to clean and safe water through traveling miles by foot or car to their nearest well pump. According to the Navajo Water Project, one in three Navajo families haul water to their homes everyday. On top of this, there are constant obstacles that interfere with their water access. Lack of infrastructure and paved roads results in the inability to drive to the nearest water source for extended periods of time. If the reservation is hit with rain, the dirt roads turn into mud and become unusable. Navajo Nation has approximately 18,000 miles of road with 15,000 of those miles being unpaved, leaving many without reliable infrastructure.

To remedy this, some residents drive water trucks with thousands of gallons of clean water, delivering the resource to individual households. Darlene Arviso, a resident of Navajo Nation, is one of the few who drives a water truck. Her route consists of approximately 200 households, and she is only able to get to each home about once a month. While these efforts keep families accessing clean water, none of them have running water.

The people of Navajo Nation strive to self-sustain, but there are many extra barriers to finding safe water on the reservation. If they dig deep enough—around 600 feet—to find water, it is often not safe to drink because it could contain uranium, according to Theresa Daivs from The Salt Lake Tribune. The uranium found in this water is from mining that was conducted during World War II and has caused people to become sick with kidney disorders and cancer.

Daivs said that in 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “breached a mine tunnel at the abandoned Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado sending 3 million gallons of acid mine drainage into the Animas and San Juan rivers.” This not only hurt Navajo farmers for the season, but it caused long term effects for those who used the water and the land. After the chemical spill, the Navajo Farming Agency had to shut off all irrigation points along the river. Turning off this water supply was detrimental to both crops and livestock.

Not only were people and property damaged physically by the spill, but there were spiritual consequences as well. Navajo Nation resident Duane “Chili” Yazzi said that the nation’s elders suffered greatly: “as culturally connected as they are to the land and the water, that was really traumatic for them to know that the water’s damaged.” Yazzi remains skeptical about the fault of the spill, saying that, “It’s been pretty well substantiated that none of that heavy contaminated water got into the irrigation system and onto the farms. But we’re often distrustful as Native people of anything that comes from outside institutions.” This distrust stems from the U.S. government perpetuating broken treaty after broken treaty.

Despite a poor prognosis, efforts are being made to combat the Navajo Nation water crisis. One organization in particular is dedicated to providing residents access to clean, running water. The Navajo Water Project, which began in 2014, is led by Indigenous people and is registered as an official enterprise of Navajo Nation. Not only is it their mission to provide homes with clean and safe, hot and cold water, but it also employs residents of the reservation with high paying jobs that provide benefits such as 100% employer-paid health coverage. The Navajo Water Project develops new sources where water is treated and stored locally, and has home water systems that provide 1,200 gallons of hot and cold running water and solar power.

In April 2020, as a response to COVID-19 relief efforts, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said, “We are United States citizens but we’re not treated like that. You can hear the frustration, the tone of my voice. We once again have been forgotten by our own government.” Indigenous communities within the United States are not immune to the outcomes of legislation built on broken promises.

Systemic water poverty leaves thousands of people on the Navajo reservation without the basic security of safe water, and is just one more example of the U.S. government failing the people of Navajo Nation. But, between protecting elders, delivering safe water and maximizing health care access, the people of Navajo Nation have proven the necessity of empathy in building sustainable and supportive communities during times of public health crises.



CULTURAL COMPETENCY IN MEDICINE AND THE ART OF SOCIAL JUSTICE:

EXCLUSIVE, INTERTWINED OR INTERDEPENDENT?



Aarti Sahai

She/Her

First-Year

Investigative Medical Sciences

As we stand at the nexus of ongoing medical advancement and increased rates of insensitivity, it is imperative that we work to reassess the lens through which we view the merits of humanity, specifically in how it informs the questions that so deeply drive us. One cannot minimize human beings down to their flesh and blood and amalgamate this very same notion onto the canvas of empirical and technical-based training. The idea that disease management is solely pathogenic is severely antiquated, as medicine represents the synthesis of the art and science of healing.

As such, in the context of the American healthcare system, it is vital that we begin to assert the need for cultural sensitivity and competency training for clinicians—health care should function as a unifying resource, not a divisive inequality. As a pluralistic society, we must move away from the theory that addressing cultural diversity is a matter external to the inherent obligations of a clinician. With increasingly diversified patient populations sprouting in clinical contexts across the nation, it is paramount that the new generation of clinicians is highly educated in addressing issues of social justice, and that their treatment mitigates—not exacerbates—the racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

Health care is currently plagued by a plethora of problems, and there are two that are particularly damaging: the misunderstanding of social justice and the division of the human into a separate mind and body.

Importantly, social justice in health care is not necessarily the good triumphing over the pervasive bad; it is not the thread of sweet liberty and idealism piercing into the cloth of deeply systemic oppression and devastation. Unlike a knight in shining armor, it is not a savior descending from the heavens of so-called academia into the pedestrian landscape of real life, imitating the very act of “being” that scholars in ivory towers spend lifetimes synthesizing and speculating upon.

Social justice is raw. Social justice is visceral, uncomfortable, oftentimes ugly. In its true inherent sense, social justice is not the arbitrary collection of studies that modern

mankind has bestowed upon actuality; it is the expression of an indomitable will, so elegantly tenacious and gracefully motivating that brutality and coercion shake in its face.

Similarly, it is important to note that it is not a spontaneous wave of saviorism that will propel our nation into delivering more just and equitable healthcare to our marginalized populations; social justice is a mission, not a moment. It will be the cumulative effect of a burning desire to actively dismantle the deeply rooted unjust practices that have consumed our institution. It is imperative, as we stand balanced between macro and micro aggressions toward the marginalized around the world, that we redefine the lens through which we perceive the entity that is social justice in the context of healthcare and define it for what is truly is: a continual and all-consuming process of pushing the paradigm of ordinary and unserving to equitable and empowering.

The division of the human into a separate mind and body is also a troublesome practice for practitioners. In their article “Losing culture on the way to competence: the use and misuse of culture in medical education,” internist Jessica Gregg and physician Somnath Saha argue that a physician’s ability to treat corrosive diseases would improve if they were deft in the ability to extrapolate the ideology behind their patient’s perception of the illness into the context of the greater science-based principles that medicine is founded upon. In order for a patient to be properly evaluated and understood on a biological level, the patient must also be evaluated on a social, emotional and cultural level. That is, clinicians must acknowledge the dynamic arena of the external factors that are linked to the internal essence of the human being that truly make that person themselves.

We must remember that to view disease outside the cultural mentality of the person who the disease belongs to is to violate the cardinal principle of what it means to truly provide humanistic health care. For a clinician and bioethicist to truly respect a patient, they must first view the patient not as another case or defining statistic, but as a human being: a living, breathing, expressive soul whose value is not external to their scientific assessment.

Recognition of our differing identities can spawn more successful care, as this inspires the way clinicians effectively and critically treat, without sabotaging the essence of what makes each individual unique. Adopting this new perspective will allow an invigorated, patient-centered, health-focused approach to arise out of medicine’s current one-dimensional analysis of disease and illness. This effective change then has the extraordinary

capabilities to metamorphosize into a social arena of cultural consciousness, recognition and alertness.

To continue with the theme of recognizing that culture, understood as dynamic and varying, best informs treatment protocol, we can turn to an article in the National Library of Medicine, titled “Intersectionality in Clinical Medicine: The Need for a Conceptual Framework”. The authors deftly deliver the cogent argument that implementing the essence of a framework rooted in the ideal of intersectionality is more conducive to narrative-based medicine. They say that, “Similarly, clinicians and researchers have come to understand that the experiences of the ‘prototypical’ white male patient do not encompass everything we need to know about health, disease, and the experience of illness.” It is vital that the American healthcare system morphs into a unifying factor that spews love, acceptance and resources equally in the context of cultural plurality. It is vital that our fellow marginalized siblings be elevated in this fight against ignorance and intolerant medicine. We can shift the paradigm from empirical-based medicine to narrative-based medicine with an emphasis on cultural sensitivity. It is vital that we fight the fight and bind the values of what makes each person whole in our souls. It is vital that we reshape. It is vital that we preserve. It is vital that we protect in the name of humanistic healthcare.

As such, change begins on the front lines where the dynamic of the clinician-patient relationship is actively tested in the face of dominating cultural barriers. Clinicians must acknowledge the dynamic arena of the external factors that are linked to the internal essence of the human being that truly make that person themselves. One must not only acknowledge the cultural differences that prevail in order to best inform their treatment protocol and maximize the chances of better patient outcomes, but also realize that culture is not a discrete, all-encompassing linear model. Rather, culture is elliptical and highly varied. It is not merely enough to immerse oneself in the aspects of a different culture; clinicians must actively begin to develop other-oriented personas in the context of the patient relationship via consistent and committed interpersonal and emotional development. To be a true practitioner in the other-oriented fashion requires, as Gregg and Saha describe, recognizing the importance of cultural sensitivity as it relates to one’s administration of medicine, while also straying from the convenient yet deceptive trap of overgeneralizing in regards to understanding a person’s background and values.

Unfortunately, some health care providers will mentally construct oppressive cages, categorizing their patients based on background and socioeconomic status as a weak, unsuccessful attempt to place some importance on the uniqueness of each individual. However, I fully believe in the notion that recognizing and extrapolating the value of cultural sensitivity in the greater arena that is medicine is fully synonymous with the act of acknowledging both the marginalized and the privileged. Perhaps then the culture of American medicine will truly embody the essence of what it means to exist on a spiritual and physical level. To fix the problems of misunderstanding social justice and dividing the human into a separate mind and body, we can simply learn to be better.

Placing a higher degree of emphasis on the unique cultural factors that influence a person stimulates more holistic care. It is in this logic that the physical and mental, informed by the social, become increasingly vital. A medical professional

cannot truly synthesize an accurate portrayal of disease through the superficial, stagnant lens of one gender, one ethnic group or one cultural community. Rather, one must utilize these categories to mold unique outlines for each individual. This is an appeal to demonstrate a commitment to understanding the highly diversified intersectionalities, the beautiful battle scars, that people exude in their daily existence.

In order to do this, we must first define social justice in a mobile sense. Accordingly, in order to begin a dynamic process of positive engagement within advantaged and disadvantaged communities alike, we must recognize the importance of initiating clear and inviting lines of communication. These lines must champion each being’s unique and deserving voice, appealing to the attitudes of our diverse landscape: a true deep dive into the complex nature of social justice. This is the physician using a patient’s correct pronouns, the nurse assuring prognosis around the patient’s religious holidays and the neurosurgeon calmly establishing a welcoming dialogue when the patient displays an anxious demeanor.

It will be messy. It will be convoluted. It may even be disheartening at times. Nonetheless, as long as we maintain our faith in the inherent resilience of humankind via palpable appeals—and not an imperceptible knight in shining armor coming to relieve us of our healthcare grievances—we stand a better chance of fighting the fight.

My identity, as is anyone’s, is not just one, all-encompassing entity of mind, body and soul, specific to the cultural and social dynamic of my makeup; it is an ever-evolving expression of the worldly movements that I stand in solidarity with, bolstered by the passionate ideals and beliefs that I hold to be cardinal in my daily life. Thus, I synthesize that my identity, as a person both working in and marginalized by healthcare, is an abstract expression of my most consistent, tangible actions, motivated by my most pressing dynamic values.

We are at the crossroads between active and stagnant, the battle between “yes we can” and “no we cannot,” a seemingly generalized yet esoteric fusion of what is happening and what is to come, the dismal present versus the potential future. We have been battling these ills of medicinal social justice for eras; misdefining its meaning while we simultaneously separate the human body from its mind. We alleviate this evil by combining our health care with real care; ensuring thoughtful administration for every being that we attend. I now ask you, cultural competency in medicine and the art of social justice: exclusive, intertwined or interdependent?

WHEN THE COST OF WORK IS PROGRESS:

Examining the Ghastly and Gendered Exploitation of Unpaid Interns



Lexi Kayser

She/Her

Junior

Research-Intensive English & Journalism

The unpaid intern, according to Hollywood tropes, should expect to spend most of her time fetching coffee and standing in the corner of important board meetings. When the CEO can not draw a conclusion, the intern should pipe up—and with an endearing stutter and a nervous adjustment of her cat-eye glasses—save the company with a genius pitch. The intern will then be allowed her own office in the full-body-windowed high rise, and a conventionally attractive male boss will spend a copious amount of time leaning against her door frame.

And the intern is always tripping, walking awkwardly—but sexily—in her daily attire: a pencil skirt. She is wearing a pencil skirt, because more often than not, she is a woman. At least the movies got that part right.

Eighty-one percent of unpaid interns are women, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers. They are not just fetching coffee; they are working on Capitol Hill and in corporate headquarters. They do not have their own offices; many work a second job to continue affording their college apartments. And they are nervous. Of course they are nervous. They are terribly tired, financially flat and 28% less likely to get

a full-time, paid position after their internship than their paid counterparts, according to Forbes.

Underpaying entry-level workers, or not paying them at all, is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it is one that has been around since paid work itself came to be. Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, as well as many cities in medieval Europe, used apprenticeships to train their future workers. Britannica recalls that the family of the apprentice would often pay the craft master, who would allow the apprentice to stay and study under them for up to nine years. An apprentice was expected to sustain himself with no net income (and while actively losing money—just as modern interns pay for rent, transportation and business clothes), all for the sake of learning the craft. Even back then the practice was corrupt. Nepotism was rampant in generational businesses, and the elitist codes of many craft guilds were tough to crack.

As time progressed, so did economic systems—the simplicity of learning, working and sustaining oneself was complexified after the Industrial Revolution. Power structures became even more tightly wound as major corporations shot up like skyscrapers; the cost of living heightened, too, and in the U.S., the minimum wage did not follow closely. Work continued to be doted as a privilege, despite the fact that it is quite literally the key to survival; without the monetary compensation from a paycheck, it is virtually impossible for someone to pay for food, shelter, clothing... much less, higher education.

The Atlantic reports that in any given year, between 500,000 to 1,000,000 college students will intern for free—about

the same number of people who reside in Washington D.C. They are conveniently excluded from the Fair Labor Standards Act, so despite working (sometimes part-time, oftentimes full-time) for the company, they are not legally required to be deemed “employees.” Without the official title, these all-but-employees pass right under protective legislation regarding labor. What the law called bare-bones justice for everyone else—entitlement to a minimum wage and overtime pay—is not assured to interns.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) justifies this inequity by calling it compromise. “The Test for Unpaid Students and Interns”—developed by the DOL for use in court cases—states in its first article that if “the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation,” the intern is not an employee, and is not entitled to pay.

The issue with compromise is that it often occurs between a rock and a hard place—for the unpaid intern, the lack of immediate pay is believed to be a fair trade for industry experience and a toe in the workforce door. Trevor Smith for The American Prospect reports that 90% of employers expect applicants to have had one or two internships by the time they graduate college. Yet, their love of employing former interns does not always transfer to their employment of interns themselves. A 2019 study for The Conversation revealed that for every 17 internship applications a student sends out, only one company is bound to offer them an interview; though employers expect experience, the amount of experience they are willing to contribute fills a shallow pool. Students are expected to put in the work when not only the payroll, but the roster, is printed against their favor.

The assumption is that students will choose if the dice roll is worth it for them—if the possibility of an upper-hand for post-grad employment is a fair exchange for unpaid time and labor. However, the narrative of “choice” is inherently exclusionary; it does not account for those who must make money to put themselves through school, to afford their current home, to purchase food and necessities, to save for the years ahead.

Once they have made the decision to go for the internship, many young people—women in particular—compromise not only their bank accounts, but their inherent labor value. The gender wage gap is ever-present on the unpaid internship scene. The National Association of Colleges and Employers found that students majoring in more conventionally feminine practices—such as journalism, fashion merchandising and human development—were more likely to apply for unpaid internships than students in majors dominated by white males—such as business, engineering and computer science. The ways different sexes sway when it comes to choosing a profession (although certain options may be publicly encouraged and patriarchy-enforced), is not the focus here; rather, the fact that women are more likely to accept an unpaid position nods to a disturbing gendered dichotomy.

Women’s labor has been unpaid and undervalued since long before they were allowed to enter the workforce at all. Child-rearing and keeping house were expectations bestowed upon them due to their sex; any individual, natural capability for care and concern was not fostered or explored, but trivialized. When we give little girls toy babies and give little boys toy cars, we already set the precedent; one will grow up to work for service, and one will grow up to work for wealth/capital/supportive pay. Women are not taking unpaid internships because their work is worth less, but because they are victims of a society that taught them to believe it is.

The consequences follow them into the paid workforce. Danielle Snaathorst, a previously

unpaid intern for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, ponders the relationship between internships and starting salaries in an essay for ATLAS. She states, “Un(der) paid internships put job applicants in a worse position when negotiating a salary,” citing that “when applying for positions at the United Nations, one is required to list the annual salaries from their previous positions and this affects the salary levels of the entry-level positions.” Snaathorst’s statements are revelatory of a cyclical salary displacement; when someone starts out doing the already blurred work of an intern for no pay, they are more likely to undervalue that same work when encountering it in a job description.

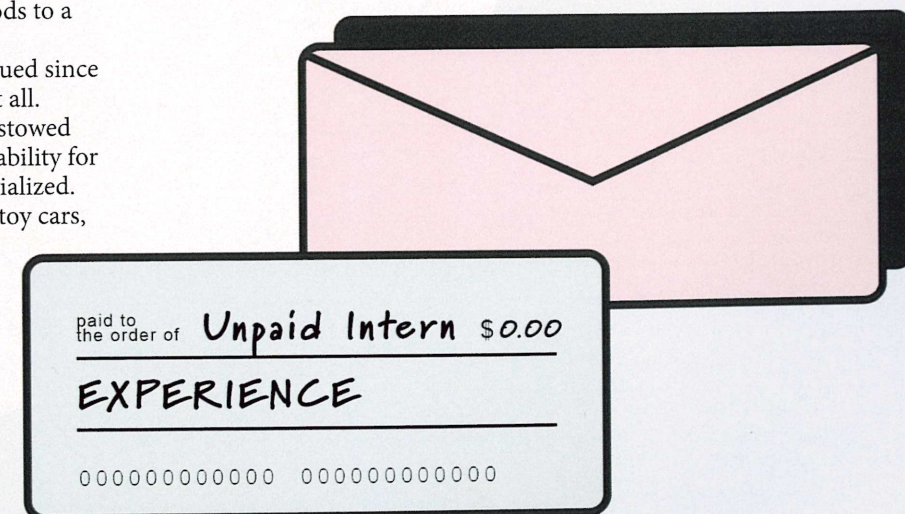
The hiring of women in unpaid internships is off-putting in its economic implications but plain insidious in its exploitation of vulnerability. As aforementioned, interns are not considered employees, and their lack of governmental protection trickles down to workplace conduct. For example, a 2017 study from the Fair Internship Initiative revealed that United Nations (UN) interns do not have access to the United Nations Dispute Tribunal or to the United Nations Appeals Tribunal—in other words, they are purposely and explicitly excluded from reporting structures. Treating the work of interns as disposable is an issue, but dismissing their concerns about workplace misconduct as trivial is nothing short of exploitation.

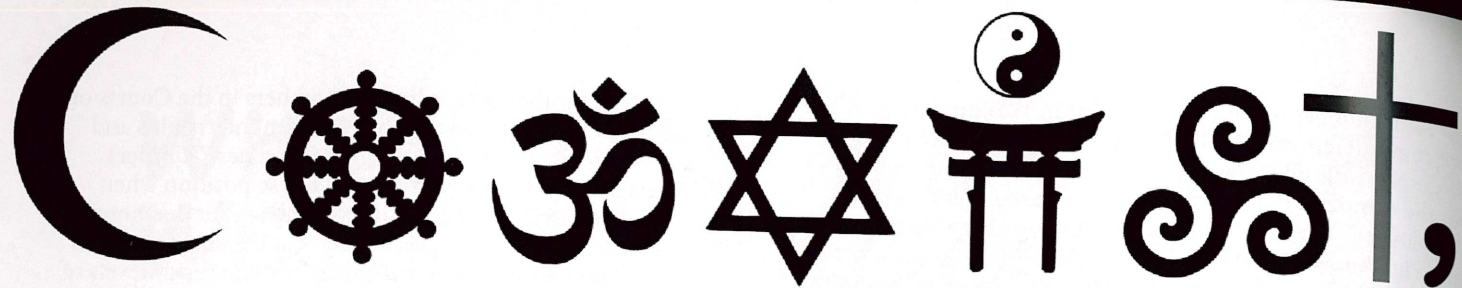
The path to fair wages for interns is being paved by those most affected; their studies, petitions and stories are amplified through organizations like Pay Our Interns, founded by two previously unpaid interns of color, and the Fair Internship Initiative, run entirely by previous youth interns of the UN. Such resounding demands have impelled large-scale changes, proving that despite what their paychecks claim, interns have power. A 2012 (female-headed) lawsuit against Vogue and Vanity Fair media-giant, Conde Nast, screeched their internship program to an irreparable halt. As recently as March of 2021, Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ayanna Pressley took to Twitter, demanding payment for State interns.

But lasting change is both individual and corporate. It takes the men at the cherry wood desks saying, “Hey, that intern is working. Work should be paid. That is fair.” It takes the hiring manager searching “intern” on every application saying, “Hey, not everyone can afford to intern. Opportunities should be equal. That is fair.”

And it takes the student in their college advisor’s office, listening to a lecture about “experience,” to stand up and say, “Hey, I am actually worth the work I do. I will not contribute to systems of oppression by willingly submitting my labor to them. That is not fair.”

It is time for interns to take back their integrity, cash in their earned paycheck and fetch their own damn coffee.





not Colonialist: New Goals Amid American Christians' Privilege



Abby Prible

She/Her

First-Year

Political Science &
International Studies

While Americans are guaranteed freedom of religion under the United States Constitution, religious privilege exists. Christians have always had religious privilege in the United States, and this is manifested in two ways: small scale benefits and large scale conversion.

On a small scale, Christians are regularly granted days off school and work to celebrate religious holidays, such as Christmas and Good Friday, and many are provided religious texts in hotel rooms, such as the Bible and the Book of Mormon. "Small" instances of privilege like this are so prevalent in our society that they often go unnoticed and can lead many Christians to have a superiority complex.

On a larger scale, the superiority complex of American Christians has historically been tied to their eagerness to convert people to their religion. According to an Ohio State University's article, "Forcing Religion on the Indigenous?," when colonists came from Europe, many of them had the goal of converting Indigenous people to Christianity. These colonists believed that they were actually doing Indigenous people a favor—saving them from eternal damnation and suffering. This idea stems from the false belief that non-Christian religions are immoral. This conversion of Indigenous and, as began later, enslaved peoples, was conversion by force, according to Marcus W. Jernegan's article "Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies."

This idea persists in our society today in the form of neocolonialism, which Britannica defines as "a further development of capitalism that enables capitalist powers (both nations and corporations) to dominate subject nations through the operations of international capitalism rather than by means of direct rule."

Many Christians travel on mission trips to foreign countries, with the goal of providing services and converting people to Christianity. An example of this is when churches travel in groups to foreign countries, often in Africa and Latin America, to paint houses or teach Bible classes to children. Gabrielle Martinez, writer of "Mission Trips Essentially Modern-Day Colonialism," is a critic of

this and says that "people on mission trips have the motive of evangelizing people who didn't ask to be evangelized." It is clear that mission trips—also known as "voluntourism"—further the white Christian saviour complex in the U.S.

Our society also often praises those who forcibly convert people to Christianity. For example, Mother Theresa is largely seen as the epitome of peace and humanitarianism. What many do not know is that Mother Theresa actually forcibly converted many people. According to Krithika Varagur, columnist for The Wall Street Journal, there are accounts of Mother Theresa attempting to baptize the dying.

Having a savior complex is not how people should coexist in society today: equality cannot exist when superiority does. Instead, let us recognize the value that diverse religious identities and various perspectives bring. In order to dismantle the system of white Christian supremacy, it is imperative that Christians recognize their privilege and focus on extending opportunities to people of non-Christian religions. Khyati Y. Joshi, writer of the book, "White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America," says, "Acknowledging how and why religious minorities suffer structural disadvantages helps us to find ways to create a society that takes all kinds of diversities into account and affords opportunities for all kinds of people to live fulfilling lives."

Through small scale benefits and large scale conversion, American Christians have experienced great religious privilege. Certainly, there has been internal violence and spiteful rhetoric between Christian groups; however, if we focus on helping others, instead of superiority and division, then we can begin to coexist.

Repression of Rights: Modi's Response to the Farmer's Protest



Ami Patel

She/Her

Senior

Health Information
Management

The arrest of 22-year-old climate activist Disha Ravi was the latest in a series of heavy-handed tactics that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is using. Ravi's arrest, the most recent of many to target activists, indicates the government's attempts to suppress support for thousands of farmers who have been protesting for months against agricultural reforms.

Ravi was accused by the government of being an "editor and key conspirator" in creating a farmers' protest "toolkit," a widely-shared online document that contains a brief argument for why people should support the farmers' protests. The toolkit, containing a list of suggested actions and resources for farmers and advocates internationally, also puts a target on the backs of the leaders of the Indian Farmers' protest. Ravi's arrest, which came after her public support for the document, is a part of Modi's government crackdown on all forms of dissent in the country.

Critics of Modi's government say the charges against Ravi are politically motivated and represent an escalation of the Indian government's clampdown on dissenters. Subir Sinha, a lecturer in institutions and development at the University of London, says, "It's a brazen move by Modi to ramp up repression and wait to see if there are international repercussions."

Not only arrests, but social media bans have been put in place by the Indian government. The government wanted approximately 1,100 accounts removed from Twitter, based on their belief that these accounts are spreading misinformation about the farmers' protests. Twitter was rebuked by India for not promptly complying with government orders to take down certain content, and the social media giant was warned that it must follow local laws to operate in the country.

The government officially installed bans with New Delhi's declaration that #farmergenocide was incendiary and baseless, alleging that it was being used to spread misinformation about the Indian government. This is incredibly pervasive; according to German data firm Statista, India is Twitter's third-largest market behind the United States and Japan, with more than 17 million users as of January 2020.

In response to the bans, the social media giant posted that "In keeping with our principles of defending protected speech and freedom of expression, we have not taken any action on accounts that consist of new media entities, journalists, activists and politicians." The current face-off against the government puts the company in a bind, where Indians have to juggle between advocating for the right of free expression and complying with local laws.

This was not a sentence I expected to write, but Rihanna was one of the first celebrities to ask why the world was not paying more attention to the farmers' protests in India. On February 2, 2021, the pop singer tweeted to her 101 million followers, bringing

the crisis to light for many. Rihanna explained that the Indian government planned to decrease regulation on corporations, which would ultimately leave farmers vulnerable to exploitation and susceptible to extreme poverty.

Upon this tweet, many were able to understand how the government is suppressing and endangering thousands of farmers. The farmers—many of whom come from the Punjab region of northern India, which has a large Sikh population—say that the government's attempt to deregulate the agricultural sector will destroy their livelihood, according to Human Rights Watch.

However, this is not just a matter for India, and it is not about just the reforms; Sikhs are now being threatened with potentially devastating pogroms, which have only increased during the government's repression of protests. Since the protests began last year, Modi's far-right government has tried to violently suppress Sikhs, lashing out at critics in a way that exposes how a nation widely regarded as "the world's largest democracy" is close to becoming an authoritarian state.

This is not the first time Sikh and Punjabi residents of India have been impacted on a larger scale. After the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 by two of her Sikh bodyguards, anti-Sikh riots erupted the following day. According to Time Magazine, more than 3,000 Sikhs were killed in New Delhi and an estimated 8,000 to 18,000 or more Sikhs were killed in 40 cities across India.

Time Magazine portrayed eyewitness accounts that described how law enforcement and government officials participated in the massacres by engaging in the violence, inciting civilians to seek vengeance and providing the mobs with weapons. Barba Crosette, a former bureau chief for The New York Times in New Delhi, pointed out that "Almost as many Sikhs died in a few days in India in 1984, then all the deaths and disappearances [of Sikhs] in Chile during the 17-year military rule of Augusto Pinochet between 1973 and 1990." Political stability has remained a challenge for minorities in India, for more than its 21 million Sikhs, as the government is building off of anti-Sikh sentiments in order to suppress the current protesters. But these protests have persisted during the Indian government's dangerous regression in free speech rights and pursuit of its Hindu nationalist agenda.

Peaceful activities protesting against discriminatory citizenship policies, such as the Citizenship Amendment Bill and the Essential Commodities Amendment Act, are facing repercussions for opposing controversial new farm laws. Authorities have continued to make baseless claims against activists of incitement, and journalists and senior politicians are facing baseless criminal cases for reporting incidents. The United Nations was involved, and the human rights office called on Indian authorities and farmers to find equitable solutions with due respect to human rights for all.

Indian authorities like to boast of the country's democracy and pluralism, but their actions all too often belittle their own words. Sikhs, Punjabis, activists and journalists are being targeted by a government that wants to limit their rights and livelihoods, and this persecution needs to stop. It is time a proper discussion began about accountability and reparations.

no Farmer Food

Beyond the Bookshelf



Lauren Hamby

She/Her
Junior
History

As a child, my summers were largely spent thinking about one thing. It was large, it was magical, it was timeless and no, it was not Disney World. I lived for my public library's annual summer reading program. Nothing quite topped the thrill of getting prizes for reading 20 books over the span of eight weeks. As I grew older, I learned to use and love the library in different ways. Databases, language-learning tools and study spaces lured me back into this institution's gentle grasp during my high school years.

Even as a college student, I find myself coming back to my local library's virtual resources. The tools that I utilize at my local branch barely begin to display the full scope of assets that these spaces offer. Internet access, job search tools, genealogy trackers and so much more are readily available to any community member regardless of whether or not they have a library card. Beyond this, of course, is the promotion of literacy at all ages, which is an essential step for any of the other tools to be useful.

With such a large breadth of resources offered to any and all people in a given community, it is clear that libraries allow for equal access to quality information across the U.S. In a nation where district lines and political debate often determine the quality of an area's education, libraries fill in the gaps and create new bridges for learning. They provide the tools needed for meaningful exchanges of intellectual ideas to occur at any level in society. This allows for connections to be made that otherwise would not exist.

As a result, libraries are an essential yet often overlooked pillar of democracy in the U.S. They provide equal access to resources that benefit community members at all levels, typically for free. This can, according to the American Library Association (ALA), allow for increased interactions with literacy, job searches and research. By continuing to raise awareness for and offer patronage to these institutions, we can work to ensure that these benefits will extend into the future.

To best understand this, we must first examine what libraries are able to give to the public and how they are able to do so. Because every system of these public institutions is a bit different, we will look in-depth at the St. Louis City Public Library system and the opportunities that it offers residents. Opening the homepage of the website for this group, it is clear that there is so much information readily available to all users. Book guides, library podcasts,

craft sessions and LinkedIn tutorials rotate on the bottom portion of the page, as the top illuminates with information on COVID-19 vaccines, Women's History Month and Black-owned businesses. One click away from the main screen brings users to tabs for databases and research guides as well as automobile repair and driving resources.

Looking at the homepage and its first tabs only, it is clear that there is a nearly overwhelming number of resources available for any community member to use. For those without internet access or computers, Chromebooks and hotspots can be checked out. Additionally, monitors, keyboards and computers are obtainable within their buildings. All of these resources are provided at no charge to the community member using them. As the St. Louis Public Library website points out, this system "responds to the needs of St. Louisans by meeting people where they are. Everyone who enters...is on equal footing."

Having an institution that works to benefit the individual in this way is absolutely pivotal for the success of our community and our country. It bridges gaps in education, access and wealth to create a society where people can receive whatever help they need to succeed. It is a personalized, methodic approach to aid that factors in the well-being of the individual community member, regardless of who they are. Their widely and diversely applicable nature makes libraries unique in their ability to aid the larger community.

Yet despite this vast number of resources and personalized assistance, libraries are still struggling to stay afloat. In early 2020, the ALA released a memo about the significance of being federally funded in enabling them to help all Americans on a variety of levels. This was in reaction to growing calls to cut library funding, including former President Donald Trump's plan to eliminate the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Cuts like these harm all libraries: academic, public and school.

Although federal funding is not the only way in which these institutions are able to stay open, it is an important aspect—state and local sources can only go so far. The Library Journal reports that local funding from the 2019 to 2020 fiscal year grew an average of 1.8%, which was "a significant drop from the previous year's 5.1 percent growth." Over two-thirds of libraries surveyed were impacted significantly by these budget cuts.

St. Louis Public Libraries are certainly feeling this change. While little information has been published about the financial situation of this institution, its website points out money from taxes makes the library good, while "the support of civic-minded individuals, corporations and foundations who recognize the need for additional private funding makes our library GREAT," pointing to the need

for additional private funding makes our library GREAT," pointing to the need for non-profit organizations and foundations to supplement local and state funding.

These financial issues do not look like they will disappear any time soon. With eyes on the future, the Library Journal notes that "sixty-one percent of libraries feel that some of the budgetary shifts they saw in 2020 will be permanent," even after a COVID-19 vaccine is widely administered and reopenings begin to occur. These statistics help to show what is obvious for many bibliophiles—funding for valuable institutions like libraries is struggling nationally and possibly permanently.

In order to help public libraries, it is essential that we all do our part in utilizing all of the incredible resources that these institutions offer. At the most basic level, check out books from libraries. This is the easiest way to help fund these institutions, as it can show the extent to which the average person is using their library. The more that people are seen using this tool, the more it is seen as a priority to the people who make the budget.

Additionally, taking the time to look through and understand your local library's available resources can make you a better advocate for these institutions. This can help you learn more and, if you share that information with others, can increase traffic to the website and to these available tools. Educating yourself on the ways in which your local library is benefiting all members of your

community can be a fast and effective way of supporting these institutions.

When I was a child, the Tulsa City County Library was giving me more than a set of stickers everytime I completed my summer reading program; it was giving me encouragement to keep learning, exploring and, most of all, loving my local library.



Connection Beyond WiFi:

THE PROS AND CONS OF ZOOM



Tara Burke
She/Her
Sophomore
Public Health

At this point in our lives, Zoom calls have almost come to define working and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are starting to see how the shift from in-person school to socially-distanced learning is affecting today's youth. Many students are struggling with online learning. Zoom is negatively impacting people's ability to learn and socialize, making us less engaged in class and less likely to interact with friends. Known as "Zoom fatigue," the lack of motivation during the pandemic has led to difficulties staying connected with friends.

A few months ago, people began realizing that all these video calls were making them exhausted, more so than a day of in-person classes. According to psychologist Brenda Weiderhold, the cause of the Zoom fatigue phenomenon is that "technology can disrupt our normal intricate human communication methods that have been finely tuned over centuries to help humans survive."

There are many ways that video conferencing could contribute to the feeling of exhaustion. First, video conferencing forces users to make extended eye contact and, according to Gianpiero Petriglieri, professor of learning and development in the workplace, nonverbal skills require more effort. The way users see themselves, sitting for hours in one place, is unnatural. Zoom fatigue is applied to remote learning. Since Zoom is a video conferencing platform, it can be used nonstop. Many parents, teachers and students have argued that this does not allow students to go at their own pace and can cause some students to fall behind in their classes.

Psychologists who specialize in education research, such as professor of educational psychology Beth Doll, are concerned about how children will cope with the ongoing loss of access to friends, teachers and routines associated with going to a physical campus or classroom. Their research shows that the school environment is critical for fostering academic motivation and social development.

Many students claim that online learning lacks structure in comparison to the traditional classroom. The absence of a physical space at home to designate a work-zone, like the classroom once offered, can leave students with a lack of focus due to many distractions found in a household. According to The New York Times, students claim that the inconsistency of schedules from teacher to teacher as well as the different teaching

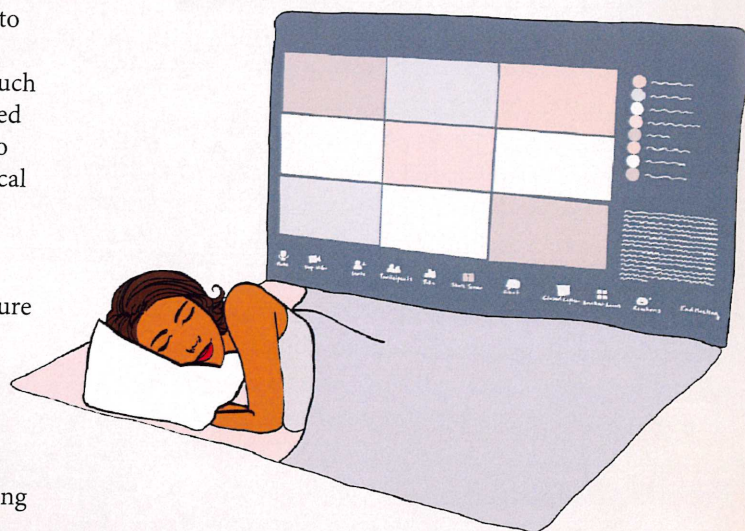
approaches used during online learning can make it difficult to keep track of what is assigned. These students have described their workload as increasing after transitioning toward online learning.

But socializing, a critical part of childhood development, is also being challenged during the Zoom era. Since the start of the pandemic, people have been staying in touch with their friends via Zoom. These virtual hangouts can make people feel less connected with their friends; it is hard to maintain friendships without seeing your friends in person. Before quarantine, our social behavior—facial expressions, tones and temperament—happened in different places, from school to work to social lives. Now nearly all of our social roles happen on Zoom.

The aspect of our lives that used to be separate are now all happening in the same place. This can make people associate work with Zoom, even if they are on a call with their friends. Being on a Zoom call with friends does not always feel like leisure because we are using this tool to do our work. According to Petriglieri, big group calls feel performative and depersonalizing.

Even though Zoom negatively affects people's ability to learn and socialize, it is still a way for us to see our friends and family while maintaining social distance. There are ways people have stayed connected via Zoom, for weddings, funerals, birthdays and graduations. You can have a karaoke night with friends, a book club meeting, a movie-watching party, a board game tournament and more.

Zoom is an unexpectedly diverse tool—which can both exhaust us and enhance our lives. It is important to recognize the negative effects of video chatting in order to consider how to use it for good purposes. While Zoom is not the same as seeing friends and family in person, it is a way for us to remain connected during this difficult time.



Manyu Mogallapalli
She/Her
First-Year
Business & Political Science

Remember when Twitter was blowing up back in June with people trying to "cancel" the popular K-pop group BlackPink? In case you were not aware, in their release of the music video "How You Like That," fans noticed a statue of Lord Ganesha placed in an Arabian-style market—almost making the idol look like a prop or some aesthetic decoration. This action was seen as especially disrespectful and ignorant because of the placement of the idol on the floor and in an Arabic setting.

This is not the first time BlackPink and other celebrities have come under fire for their offensive appropriation of South Asian culture and, more specifically, Hinduism spirituality practices. BlackPink previously faced backlash after inappropriately performing Bharatnatyam, a classical Indian style of dance. Additionally, group member Lisa

When Life Gives You Lululemons



wore a jacket depicting Lord Shiva and Lord Ganesha as a fashion statement.

They are not the only ones, however. Recently Rihanna was called out after posting a topless image of herself wearing a necklace with a Lord Ganesha pendant, which is not the first time that she has been religiously insensitive. Vanessa Hudgens has been in the spotlight for her consistently appropriative outfits at events like Coachella, where she has worn a sari inappropriately as well as bindis and mehndi. Loyal fans have continued to defend these celebrities' actions, without considering the painful effect it might have on the people of these religions and cultures.

These are just a few examples. Social media has monetized and exploited spirituality for far too long. With celebrities not held accountable for their ignorance, the internet is now at risk of giving platforms to inauthenticity.

Think about yoga, one of the oldest practices to exist. It is a group of physical, mental and spiritual disciplines that originated in ancient India in about 2700 B.C., according to India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Many do not know this but it is also depicted in yogic scriptures in Hinduism and has religious connections. Unfortunately this sacred teaching has been colonized by brands, like Lululemon and Fabletics, and influencers, who are paid to sell westernized products like mats, pants and crystals.

Do you practice yoga? Some ways you can make sure you are doing it ethically are outlined by yogi Nisha Ahuja, who educates on ethically conscious yoga practices. To prevent cultural appropriation, you can make sure you are not viewing yoga solely as an exercise, as its true intentions are not for weight loss, and researching how it should be used for clarity, self love and balance. The Sanskrit word for yoga, "yuj," means to unite the mind, body and spirit, according to MEA. If you practice yoga, practice it how it ought to be.

With the rise of social media, it has become even harder to prevent appropriation of religions and cultures. From big, like Coachella's monetization

of Desi clothing and accessories, to small, like tarot card readings on TikTok, the effect of insensitivity is persistent. Educating yourself on a cultural practice can simultaneously respect its people, honor the traditions, recognize the real experts and enhance your own experiences. If you like yoga now, imagine how much you will appreciate it when you're doing it right.

Fair Tones & Unfair Standards

Colorism, Beauty and the Media



Maaria Firdaus

She/Her

First-Year

Investigative Medical Sciences

"How is your mom so much lighter than you?"

"How can you be darker than her, she's from Africa?"

"Try these natural remedies, they will make your skin look fairer and pretty!"

"Don't play outside for too long or else you will become darker!"

"You would be prettier if you were lighter."

These are just some of the comments I have heard as an Indian American about my complexion. Although these comments do not affect me much now, hearing them as a child from my peers and relatives definitely impacted my self-esteem and created an obsession with how to lighten my skin in order to fit in. Colorism is a deeply rooted issue with a complicated past that affects many women of color across the world, and manifests itself into the eurocentric beauty standards which are pushed by the media today.

The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) defines colorism as a form of discrimination in which those with lighter skin are treated more favorably than those with darker skin. Colorism causes the marginalization of a group of people solely due to the amount of melanin in their skin. This practice is a product of racism in the United States in that it upholds the white standards of beauty and benefits white people in the institutions of oppression. To put blatantly, colorism is the child of racism.

In early America, enslaved people with lighter skin were assigned domestic tasks while those with darker skin were forced to work outside in the fields, doing much more grueling tasks according to Leaders Igniting Transformation. Enslaved people that were lighter-skinned were favored because they were often the product of an slave owner raping a enslaved person, thus creating a lighter-skinned child.

The NCCJ outlines techniques, such as the paper

bag test, which was utilized in Black spaces for hiring Black people, where one would be allowed to work only if their skin was lighter than a paper bag. This limited a dark skinned person's ability to provide for themselves and their family simply by how their skin color compared to a paper bag. Today, this issue spans beyond our nation.

The effects of colonialism in countries like India have direct negative impacts to colorism. Colorism in India has been around for ages, according to the Borgen Project, and first began when the Aryans, who were from Europe and Central Asia, came to India. They typically had lighter skin complexions and ruled the natives, perpetuating a cycle of colonization.

India's long history of being colonized and conquered by light skin oppressors such as the Persians, the Mughals and the British has led to the systematic belief that light skin and even eurocentric features are better and can be associated with power. This harmful ideology seeped into India's hierarchical social caste system. Lighter skinned individuals are higher up the caste as they were indoors whereas darker skinned individuals were performing physical labor outside, according to research conducted by Neha Mishra at Washington University Global Studies Law Review.

Slavery and colonialism's historical impacts have translated into today's media and the standards that are pushed toward women with darker skin, especially Black women. Georgia State University's research shows how darkness is typically and inaccurately connected to negative connotations such as aggression and violence that are attached to hyper masculine ideals. This is harmful to darker skinned women as they are seen as more aggressive and defeminized. In 2018, renowned athlete Serena Williams was the subject of a racist cartoon that played to the power of colorism; portraying Williams's reaction to losing a tennis match, artist Mark Knight's culturally insensitive depiction—an exaggerated and offensive portrayal of Williams—was based on the fact that she had

darker skin than her opponent.

According to the National Survey of Black People, among magazine advertisements targeted to Black readers, studies indicate that Black men are typically depicted as substantially darker than Black women. This shows that for Black women, light skin tones can be used to adhere to eurocentric notions of femininity and whiteness.

On the contrary, women of color in the media are also hyper-sexualized, exotified and objectified on the basis of colorism, as well as face intensified whitening. Research conducted by Minnesota State University (MSU) revealed that out of 278 magazines, 52 covers displayed women of color. Of those covers, 90% of these women of color were in hypersexual positions and whitened to a certain degree. These covers—which young girls, teens and women all see—mask women of color with whiteness and degrade them through sexualized objectification.

Hence, so many American women of color like Keke Palmer, Normani and Mindy Kaling have to work extra hard to not only make it in the industry, but survive and maintain relevance in the face of dehumanization by the media and degradation over their skin tone.

But average women also face challenges and pressure to lighten their skin. The Fitzpatrick Scale is a spectrum used by dermatologists to calculate the melanocytes in a patient and determine their susceptibility to skin cancer, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. Lighter skin, with the highest risk of ultraviolet (UV) exposure is ranked one, while darker skin, that is least susceptible to UV damage, is ranked six. According to the Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology (IJDVL), the average population in India falls under the 4-6 range. However, when Maybelline's "Fit Me," a slate of 40 foundations promising to match any consumer's skin tone, was introduced in India, only 17 shades were released and nearly all were for lighter complexions. Maybelline's earnest attempt for inclusive and accessible foundation was undermined by showing preference toward lighter skin

tones.

In order to fit into societal expectations, many darker skinned individuals turn toward drastic methods such as skin bleaching creams and lighter foundations that not only alter a person's physical appearance, but also cause harmful psychological and physical conditions. According to Healthline Media, bleaching creams, such as Fair and Lovely, contain high amounts of ammonia, mercury, sulfates, parabens and carcinogens that cause irreparable damage to the skin and self-esteem of users.

Yet in 2017, the global skin lightening market value amounted to about 4.8 billion U.S. dollars, according to Statista, and is forecasted to reach some 8.9 billion U.S. dollars by 2027. This dangerous trend has extorted billions of dollars from dark skinned women, by encouraging them to buy into the idea that success, beauty and love come from light skin. Monetizing fair skin came from both subliminal and overt messaging over years, leaving darker women with the choice between being discriminated against because of their skin tone or being sexualized because of their "ethnic features."

In her book "In Search of our Mothers' Garden," author and activist Alice Walker explains colorism as prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people, based solely on the color of their skin, and pays specific attention to the objectification of darker skinned women. Walker poetically and personally addresses the divide between lighter and darker skinned Black women, and argues this split—between people within the same community—is of the utmost danger.

Colorism is born out of white supremacy, and this has been evident through the British Empire's imperializing of South Asian nations, America's treatment of enslaved Africans and the inaccurate beliefs passed down from mothers to daughters. The correlation between fairness and beauty is false: dark is beauty.



In Indian mythology, Lord Krishna is depicted as blue, instead of the darker complexion that many native Indians are. Krishna, interestingly, means "dark."

Parks and Revitalization

Providing Mental Health in Urban Spaces



Ava Gagner

She/Her
Junior
Sociology

The NBC sitcom “Parks and Recreation” advocates for the development of parks. The first season of the show focuses on an empty pit where, after listening to the community members’ concerns, Pawnee, Indiana Parks and Recreation employee Leslie Knope takes on the project of turning the pit into a park. In Season 1 Episode 2, Knope explains the significance of this park, saying, “Why do I want to build this park so bad? Maybe because a pit filled with garbage isn’t the best that we can do in America.”

This sentiment illustrates why we value parks in our communities because, instead of eyesores like pits full of garbage, parks provide a space to enjoy the outdoors and engage with other residents. Knope’s passion for parks and her community is contagious throughout the show, as she convinces fellow government employees, residents and the audience to rally behind the development of this neighborhood park.

Knope always places emphasis on the betterment of her community and its health over the course of the seven seasons of the show. The consideration of the community should always be a priority when developing greenspaces in our cities, especially since parks can have a profound impact on the mental health of city residents.

According to the United Nations, 54% of the world’s population lives in urban areas and that number is expected to grow to 66% by 2050. As we become an increasingly urban species, it is important that we don’t lose our greenspaces to parking lots and apartment buildings. It is clear that we already value parks in our cities, since Central Park is visited 42,000,000 times annually, Lincoln Park in Chicago is visited 20,000,000 times annually and Forest Park here in St. Louis is visited 15,000,000 times annually, according to the Trust for Public Land Use.

However, while some cities pride themselves on their parks, other cities fall behind when it comes to providing

greenspace amenities to its citizens. The Trust for Public Land Use reports that Minneapolis is the highest-rated big city for public parks, with 95% of its residents living within a ten minute walk from one. Other highly-rated cities include Chicago, Boston, New York and San Francisco, all with parks in walking distance for at least 90% of their residents. Not only do these cities have large parks, but also neighborhood parks scattered throughout the city. Other cities, including Jacksonville, Louisville, San Antonio and Nashville all have especially poor park access, with over 60% of their residents not having walkable access to a park. In Charlotte, the lowest rated big city, only 26% of people have walkable access. These cities are falling behind in terms of greenspace, and this can have negative consequences for these cities and their residents.

Our parks can do more for our mental health than most people might think. One benefit is that parks provide people a space for exercise, whether that be walking, running, biking or playing sports. The Mayo Clinic reports that regular exercise can help ease depression and anxiety as well as improve self-esteem and mental well-being. Parks, importantly, also function as a space for social interaction. Having positive social interactions can improve mental well-being through increasing self-esteem and empathy along with promoting feelings of support and belonging in a community.

Parks can also help combat air, noise and light pollution, which all have an impact on mental health. Noise and light pollution can delay and interrupt sleep and, according to a study from John Hopkins University, individuals with sleeping problems are 10 times more likely to experience depression. Poor sleep can also worsen symptoms for those who have mental health disorders like depression and anxiety. Parks are able to create better sleeping conditions for community members, as they serve as a barrier to noise and light pollution.

It is important for greenspaces to be near living spaces, even if that just involves planting trees between the street and the sidewalk, because their proximity can limit the effects of air, noise and light pollution. Trees and parks can also help with air pollution since they absorb heavy metals and other pollutants so that we do not breathe them. The American Psychological Association reports that there is a link between air pollution and depression, as well as a link

between cognitive decline later in life and air pollution. In the United States, low income, inner city neighborhoods are disproportionately impacted by poor air quality. This means that these neighborhoods must be prioritized when planning greenspaces in a city to try and negate some of the harmful effects of air pollutants that they have been experiencing for years.

Mental health problems are more common in cities, and urban living increases the risk for developing depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and cocaine and heroin addiction according to the World Health Organization. In order to combat the high prevalence of mental health disorders, cities need to do what they can to promote better mental health for their residents.

Not only can a city impact a resident’s mental health, but mental health problems can have a huge negative impact on cities. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the direct and indirect cost of mental health is over 5% of the gross domestic product. Despite this spending, there is still an unmet need for treatment, meaning that this spending must be increased in order to provide enough services to support those with mental health disorders in cities. Some of the direct costs include health care, social care and disability costs.

However, many people do not receive the treatment they need and cities rarely are able to provide access for everyone to the services needed. Mental health can affect many aspects of people’s lives, and can lead to higher rates of physical health problems and even mortality. An individual’s employment, finances, relationships with friends and family and their ability to be a part of an urban community can all be impacted by mental health.

When considering the challenge of mental illness in cities, it is clear that investments need to be made to improve the lives of residents. While it may not seem like a priority for cities to spend money on greenspaces, parks really can have a huge impact on people’s mental health. According to research done at the University of California, San Diego, separation from nature is detrimental to human development, health and well-being. The study found that depression was 33% higher for those living in areas with the fewest greenspaces, compared to those living in neighborhoods with the most. Over time, living near a greenspace can have significant improvements on mental health, with individuals who moved to greener areas having significantly better mental health recorded three years after the move.

A successful park takes more than just throwing some playground equipment on a patch of grass and calling it a day. Parks need to be carefully planned and maintained if they are to enhance the quality of life of their visitors. Parks quickly lose their utility and value if the general public views the area as unsafe. Bryant Park in New York City was once an unsafe place where people lacked comfort and security when they visited, however the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation (BPRC) was able to reclaim this space in the 1990s. Bryant Park has a great location in midtown Manhattan but, before the revitalization, few people went there except for drug deals.

Crime and lack of maintenance both made the park seem like an undesirable place to be. However, the biggest

issue was that there was nothing to do inside the park. When tackling the revitalization, BPRC made sure that the space would be used for public events like historical park tours and concerts. They also added food kiosks, a stand for buying theater tickets and a restaurant to give people more reasons to visit the park. The park was also made to feel safer by adding more lighting and opening up the entrances to give a better line of sight to guests. These changes doubled the number of annual park visitors, which in turn reduced crime by 92% according to the National Recreation and Park Association.

An important part of revitalization and creation of parks is maintaining the authenticity of the community. Gentrification is a very real danger to urban areas, as it can drive out long-term inhabitants and undermine the respected culture of an area. Instead of increasing police and patrolling, BPRC made the park more secure by adding safety features and making it a desirable place for community members; they mitigated crime through greenspace improvements and not militaristic forces. A balance between making safer conditions and preventing the removal of a community’s culture is essential to the successful growth, installment and acceptance of greenspaces.

It is clear that greenspaces are important to our mental health, but how we determine where we put parks, how we revitalize them and how they should be designed is dependent on the community that the parks will serve. In a neighborhood with lots of children, a park with playground equipment and soccer fields would be a good fit. In a neighborhood with an older population, it is more important to prioritize a lot of seating and clear walkways. Overall, the goal should be to beautify parks for the people that will use them. Community input is essential when it comes to design, since citizens should feel both enriched by green spaces and invested in their well-being. Having parks that the community values will mean that they are better maintained, widely utilized, and able to have a significant impact on people’s lives.

The development of the pit into a park in “Parks and Recreation” was not portrayed to be an easy process. Characters in the show faced many barriers to its development, and the park ultimately was not completed until the seventh season of the show. Despite the long process, the results were worthwhile since the park transformed and improved the community greatly. There was no longer the danger of an open pit full of garbage or the eyesore of an empty lot. The park, though small, still provided a great space for the community to come together and enjoy the outdoors.

The success of this park was attributed to Parks and Recreation employee Leslie Knope’s passion for her community. Her emphasis on communal involvement should be an emphasis of every park development project. The goal of parks should always be to provide for the community, since neighborhood greenspaces can have incredible impacts on the mental health of nearby residents. Prioritizing mental health in the planning of greenspaces should be commonplace, because a park’s purpose is not just to beautify a city, but also to be utilized by the community. Parks are for the people and should be planned by the people, making the people themselves a priority in the development process.

Reading Ruins for Commemorative Justice



Giovanni Lauriello
He/Him
Sophomore
International Studies

The ground that we walk upon today as Saint Louis University (SLU) students has been sown with the blood of suffering. Events like the killing of Michael Brown, the razing of Mill Creek Valley and the demolition of Pruitt Igoe demonstrate how racial violence is integral to St. Louis's spatial formation. These examples of racial violence and oppression can explain current inequities within the city.

Barriers have been erected within the space of St. Louis to keep the painful truth of the city's racial violence out-of-sight and out-of-mind. When I say the words "Delmar Divide," we all intuitively understand how the codification of racism into mid-20th century housing covenants is still with us today in the form of disinvestment away from Black and brown St. Louis communities north of Delmar Boulevard. The buildings of St. Louis have stubbornly reinforced the city's segregation into two separate spaces, even if all

the original racist planners and policymakers have died off.

One of the most obvious manifestations of this spatial division is the slew of abandoned buildings in St. Louis. The 2019 Environmental Racism in St. Louis Report notes that upwards of 90% of the city's vacant properties are in majority-Black neighborhoods. Sundy Whiteside, Board President of the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations, writes of the emotional impact that abandoned buildings have upon their communities, expressing how they "give birth to destructive behaviors, a loss[sic] sense of pride and complete hopelessness" to nearby residents. Abandoned properties have become looming figures of dereliction that are used to justify narratives of disinvestment and the criminalization of poverty. But they are also sites for a radical re-imagining of what is possible in St. Louis: platforms for commemorative justice.

The Majestic Theatre in East St. Louis was closed in the 1960s due to the economic decline of a deindustrializing East St. Louis, an area whose white population fled for the suburbs of St. Louis during the same timespan, according to "The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of



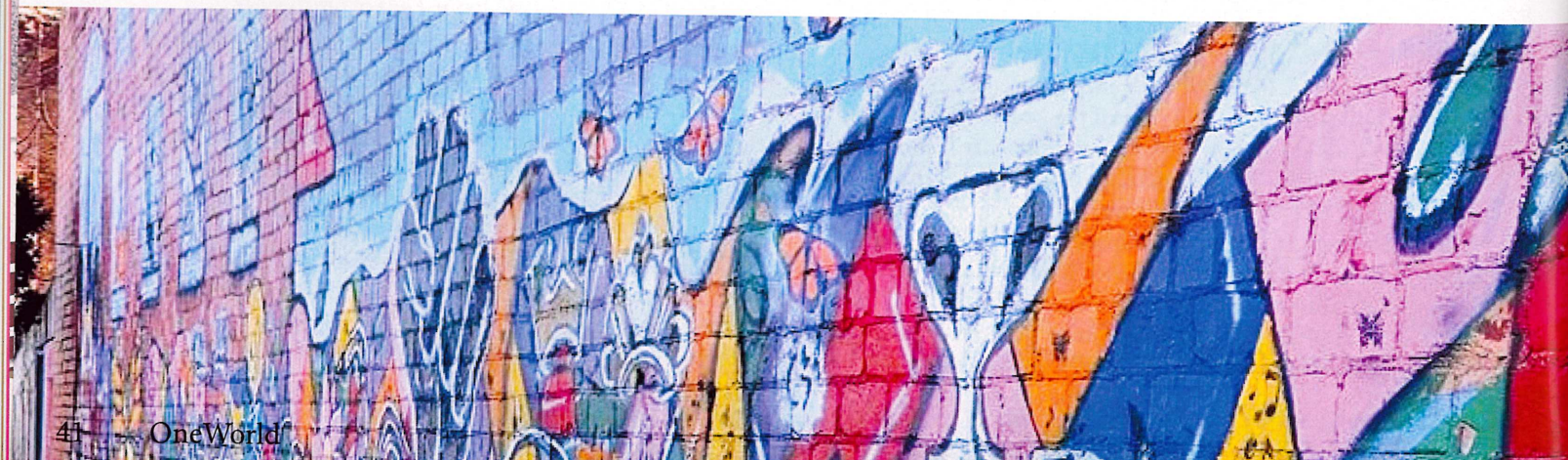
the United States." East St. Louis was known for its exploitation of Black labor in the 19th century; the massacre that was the 1917 Race Riots stemmed from the common industrial practice of replacing striking white laborers with Black laborers new to East St. Louis. The Aluminum Corporation, Monsanto and steel companies standardized this racist exploitation, a practice that, combined with white entitlement, incited racist killings.

Once the money in East St. Louis dried up in the 60s, these corporations extricated themselves from East St. Louis, abandoning former glories like the Majestic Theatre. The perception of East St. Louis today is one of high crime and poverty—per the latest Census data, 33.4% of East St. Louis residents are in poverty.

Despite being told this, all I saw at the Majestic Theatre was a bright future engaged with the ruins of East St. Louis's exploited past: a mural coated

alongside the side of the Majestic. Kas, known as @blackkbobbross on Instagram, is the artist behind the mural and he expressed his vision of the Majestic as a community center focused on accruing Black wealth and art in East St. Louis. Ultimately, he wants to "bridge the gap for the East side," using the Majestic as a means to refute both the city's violent past and the contemporary narratives of East St. Louis that stem from a cursory reading of these pasts.

Across the Mississippi, ruins have become integral to a just future. The destruction from the past—killings, divestment and discrimination—provides a canvas for beautification and reclamation of narratives; symbols of justice are built from ruins of racism. We as SLU students can replicate this critical practice of engaging with and honoring our "ruins" in St. Louis, one small commemoration at a time.



READING FOR THE REVOLUTION:

HOW DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE TEACHES YOUNG ADULTS TO THINK CRITICALLY



Amanda VanNierop

She/Her

Sophomore

English & Political Science

Like millions of other middle schoolers in 2012, “The Hunger Games” fascinated me. The idea of a dystopian North America where teenagers must fight to the death as penance for a failed revolution (coupled, of course, with the love triangle trope that held the young adult dystopian genre in a tight grasp) was unique and intriguing.

It is no surprise that adolescents are drawn to dystopian books. Research by Justin Scholes and Jon Ostenson, associate professors of English, has shown that dystopian literature bridges the gap between childhood and adulthood in terms of cognitive thinking. They find that as adolescents develop, they are “able to grasp bigger, more abstract concepts and consequences in the world around them and can engage in more critical thinking; they also show increasing interest in issues related to

society at large.” Adolescence is the time when people begin developing deep moral values and questioning political structures. “The Hunger Games” allows them to explore and apply questions, like: *could a government be so cruel? Why are the citizens of Panem letting this happen? Can a 16-year-old really take down an oppressive regime?*

Introducing young adults to literature that allows them this expression while appealing to Young Adult (YA) tropes means that Generation Z has been decently exposed to political philosophy and commentary from a young age.

Of course, I had been shown dystopian literature before reading “The Hunger Games”: “The Giver” appeared on my seventh-grade syllabus, as well as “Fahrenheit 451” and the short story “Harrison Bergeron.” However, “The Hunger Games” was different. Unlike Bradbury and Vonnegut, Suzanne Collins wrapped her political commentary in a story about star-crossed lovers and the resilience of a teenage girl fighting for her family, her life and her people. As a result, “The Hunger Games” appealed to the masses and planted the seed for a generation of young adults to start thinking critically about their own government—a process further facilitated by other YA dystopian literature, such as “Divergent” by Veronica Roth and the “Unwind” series by Neal Shusterman. Now, amidst a pandemic and nearly a decade after Katniss drew her first arrow, we have to ask ourselves: was this crash course in political philosophy enough for Generation Z? Has dystopian literature adequately prepared us for this era in history?

First, we must determine if dystopian literature provides an accurate and relatable critique of our current society. Dystopia, according to Scholes and Ostenson, is used as “a literary technique to discuss reality,” meaning that some part of a dystopian story must be based in or on our reality. However, this typically comes in the form of referencing the society we currently live in as a society of the distant past. “The Hunger Games,” for example, takes place in the year 2147; any reference to a world before Panem is foreign to our main characters. Other dystopian literature, while not set in a specific year, is also characterized as taking place in the far future. How,

then, can we relate to a story that takes place decades (and even centuries) after us?

The answer is simple; the political commentary that dystopian authors present is based in our reality, even if the rest of the story is not. For example, “Fahrenheit 451” is famously a critique on government censorship. The idea of the police raiding our homes for books to burn may be outrageous, but the reality of government censorship is something we are quite familiar with. The same goes for more recent YA dystopian literature. In “Unwind,” teenagers can legally (and horrifically) be harvested for organs and body parts if their parents decide they no longer want them. The larger political commentary that Shusterman presents is actually on abortion and the question of how much say the government should have in bodily autonomy.

Dystopian literature is relatable in that we can recognize the larger political themes at play and even note similarities between what we are reading and our own society. Think about the last time you heard someone say that keeping your computer webcam uncovered meant that “Big Brother” was watching you, alluding to the omnipresent surveillance by the major antagonist in George Orwell’s “1984.” Or the last time a tweet compared a young, female activist to the likes of Katniss Everdeen. We, as a generation, have learned to call out when our world starts to take the shape of a dystopia. So, if we can recognize when our society feels dystopian, has YA dystopian literature adequately prepared us?

One can argue that YA dystopian literature, at its core, simplifies the political state too much. For example, President Snow from “The Hunger Games” speaks in evil aphorisms and forces teenagers to kill each other—he is blatantly the villain. Thus, one might argue that comparing the exaggerated evils of President Snow to former President Trump oversimplifies Trump’s character without actually holding him accountable for his actions. Only stating the similarities between Snow and Trump fails to identify the particular qualities and actions of each. When formulating robust governmental critiques, one cannot simply stop at broad comparisons. The same can be said for the intense anti-government themes of dystopian literature. Simply saying “government control is bad” can be dangerous, as it oversimplifies a complex political state that might deserve a more in-depth critique.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the audience of YA literature is, of course, young

adults. There is no expectation that readers between the ages of 12 and 18 have been taught complicated political theory—and that is assuming they have been taught political theory at all. Therefore, YA dystopian literature teaches complex ideas about politics through simplified themes. In “The Hunger Games,” we are introduced to the unfair consequences of class differences by being shown two extremes: the intense poverty of District 12 and the absurd wealth of the Capitol. The citizens of District 12 are putting their lives at risk for simple grain and oil, while the citizens of the Capitol partake in purging during feasts to keep indulging. The differences here are not subtle, but that is what makes them effective.

YA dystopian literature succeeds in its goal of introducing important socio-political themes and commentary to the next generation. This genre bridges the gap between childhood and adulthood by engaging teenagers in complex questions about our world. YA dystopian literature also enables teenagers to create a bridge between literature and the real world, facilitating questions and curiosity.

Backed by strong-willed and sympathetic characters like Katniss Everdeen, Tris Prior and Connor Lassiter, young adults are increasingly prepared to think critically about their world, governments and communities. These readers have grown up armed with questions and commentary, alongside fantasy and adventure. Generation Z has been tasked with challenging our political state more and more as each new novel comes out. It’s what we have been training to do since middle school.



Resurrection from Insurrection



Justice Hill
He/Him
Junior
Political Science

January 6, 2021—the day that white supremacists flooded the Capitol in protest of President Joe Biden's election—was a moment where the United States of America had to look itself in the mirror and ask a question. *Is this who we really are?*

Nationwide, we have heard and seen the practices of racism and discrimination. We have heard the cries of “Black Lives Matter” and “Say Her Name” by Black Americans asking for justice and equity in America; and we have seen these cries met by much opposition. Following the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other Black lives, we have seen police lined up and ready for war with tear gas and rubber bullets, when Black people were upholding their freedom to protest.

Why is it that when Black lives protest, there is much police opposition, whereas on January 6, a mostly white crowd was able to invade the Capitol? What if the insurrection had been done by a group of Black people? I believe they would not have made it to the steps or even past the fence.

When thinking of the Capitol insurrection, I cannot help but think of the history of the United States of America—specifically, the parts of our American history that people oftentimes try to cast into the darkness. I cannot help but think to the history of slavery, white supremacy and Jim Crow segregation. I cannot help but think of the time when “separate but equal” was the law of the land. I cannot help but feel as if America is going back in time. The fact that this event took place only six days after the start of the new year illuminates that, in spite of America coming a long way, we still have a very long road to follow. To fully understand if this is “who we really are,” we must first unpack the nuance of the insurrection: describe in detail the pain we all felt.

Words cannot describe how disheartening it was to see the Confederate flag being carried through the Capitol rotunda. When I see that flag I think of injustice, inequality, oppression and bondage. I truly view the Confederate

flag as a symbol of hate, and seeing it carried through the Capitol building, while very disheartening, was not something that I am surprised by.

Since I was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina, it was not uncommon for me to see the Confederate flag multiple times a week, whether it was on bumper stickers, flown on the backs of trucks or hung in front of people's houses. Most people who are in support of the Confederate flag argue that it is historical and honors many. Yet, the terrible history that the flag contains is undeniable. Over 150 years after the end of the Civil War, the battle against its hateful imagery persists. The flying of the Confederate flag highlights the prevention of progress and says that no matter how far we come toward the finish line of justice, equality and freedom, this line will continue to be moved further back.

In fact, the Confederate flag was flying high over the South Carolina State House until 2015. It was not until the murder of nine African Americans attending Bible study at Mother Emanuel Church that this symbol of hate was taken down by legislators. According to The State, the Confederate flag was officially removed from the South Carolina State House on July 9, 2015. This was not very long ago. I can vividly remember this day just as I can vividly remember the Capitol insurrection. Both the hateful flag and violent insurrection revealed that our journey as a nation is far from over.

As the rioters and insurrectionists approached the Capitol, they were not striving to make peace. They were striving to bring about pain and destruction. They were armed with not only physical weaponry, but a mindset

of hate; the hate that these insurrectionists acted with is comparable to a wildfire of irreparable destruction fueled by white supremacy.

The overwhelming majority of those that were in attendance at the Capitol insurrection were white individuals, and many of them were fervent supporters of former President Donald Trump. Many recognized hate groups, such as neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan affiliates and the Proud Boys, were present, according to the Washington Post.

One cannot ignore the level of privilege—and freedom—that those individuals had in order to carry out their plan. In spite of Congresspeople and other officials present, there was little push back by security. In fact, many news outlets, including ABC, CNN and CBS, showed a video revealing police officers opening the barricades to insurrectionists, allowing them to enter Capitol grounds prior to reaching the building.

Viewing this situation from the perspective of an African American today, I cannot help but put things into perspective. If Black Lives Matter protesters were at the Capitol, there would be police armed and ready for war. After George Floyd was brutally murdered by police and Black people came together to protest, they were met with police armed with rubber bullets, tear gas and strength in numbers. Where was this army of police on January 6? How were these insurrectionists able to invade one of the most secure buildings in the country with little pushback?

America is not color blind; the Capitol insurrection illuminated that America in fact sees color crystal clear. The insurrectionists were stirring up trouble for America. However, it is high time for us to push for what the late, great politician and activist John Lewis called “good trouble.” In 2020, the former Georgia Representative and close colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described “good trouble”—pushing back against oppression—as necessary to redeem the soul of America.

We must perpetuate good trouble. Just as the hate

that the insurrectionists acted with is comparable to a wildfire, we need some firefighters that are ready to come in and fight this wildfire to end white supremacy and let there be justice for all.

In the critical reflective writing “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community,” published in 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., opens his debate with this point: the majority of white Americans consider themselves sincerely committed to justice for Black Americans. They believe that American society is essentially hospitable to fair play and open to steady growth toward a middle class utopia embodying racial harmony.

He postulates that unfortunately this is a fantasy of self-deception and comfortable vanity. He further imparted that the movement for Black power did not spring fully grown from the head of philosophical zens, rather it was born from wounds of despair and disappointment. One of the chief affirmations of the Black power movement was the call for the mobilization of political strength for Black people.

The empowerment that Dr. King declared called for the effective challenging of racist narratives: for hate and bigotry to be chopped down to a small, containable burning bush. The chaos of our present time requires a clarion call for a tall cypress tree with extensive branches of justice. In 2021, a

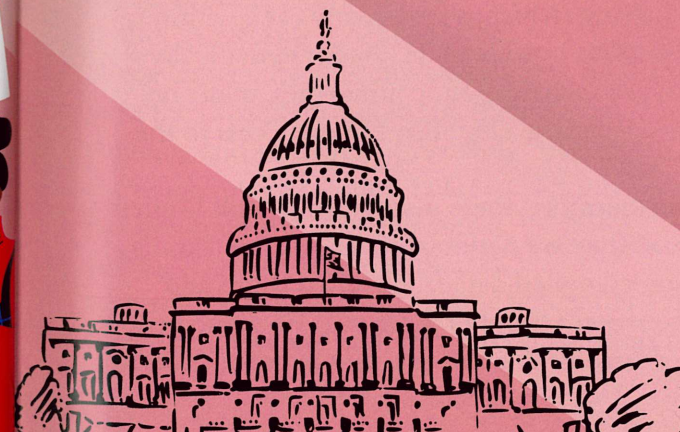
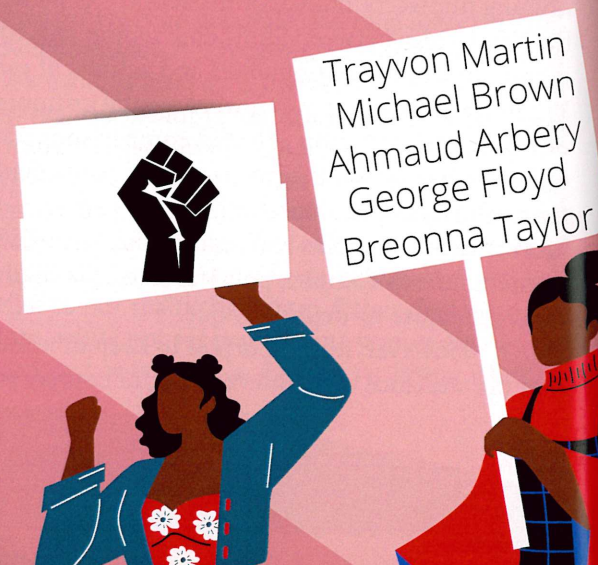
world home to racism, discrimination, injustice, incessant Asian hate and the January 6 Capitol insurrection, we need Dr. King's words and wisdom to understand our own nation and move forward.

As we watch and reflect upon this year, we should critically analyze the state of our nation. Is this America? Is this the America that we would like to build a future in?

“Is this who we really are?” is a complex question to answer. Instead, we must focus on another: “where do we go from here?” The answer is clear: we must transform that Capitol insurrection into a resurrection of Dr. King's words. If anything, the Capitol insurrection was a major step back in America; we fell victim to hate and intolerance. A resurrection of justice, equity and love for all mankind can remedy this, and we can learn how to do this “good trouble” through Dr. King's critical look at America.

I believe that we can transform this insurrection into a resurrection if we seize the gift of the present time to make a better tomorrow. It will not be easy but it can be done. We have come a very long way, yet we still have a long way to go.

"I believe that we can transform this insurrection into a resurrection if we seize the gift of the present time to make a better tomorrow"



THE GATEWAY GAP:

EQUITABLE ACCESS IN SAINT LOUIS CITY



Dhvanii Raval

She/Her

Junior

Neuroscience

Pfizer. Moderna. Johnson & Johnson. For the past several months, these names have been repeatedly brought up regarding the simultaneously alluring and elusive COVID-19 vaccination. While some were able to get it early in the pandemic, most are still unaware of when it will be made available to them. As members of the Saint Louis University (SLU) community, we have received numerous emails from the university about their efforts to provide us with the vaccination as expediently as possible. However, that raises the question of how communities outside the SLU bubble will gain the very necessary access to this vaccine.

In Missouri, the COVID-19 vaccination has been distributed in phases. Phase 1 focuses on healthcare workers and high-risk populations, whereas Phases 2 and 3 focus on disproportionately affected individuals (such as unhoused individuals) and the remainder of Missouri residents, respectively. Although this seems like an ideal plan, the way vaccines have actually been distributed has proven unattainable to Saint Louis City residents with socioeconomic barriers. This has

resulted in a vaccine gap, or a difference between those eligible for the vaccine and those that receive it.

As of February, the Department of Health and Senior Services found the vaccine gap in Saint Louis City to be in the top five highest gaps of all the counties in the state, in large part due to vaccine deserts in urban Saint Louis. In fact, Deloitte, a consulting company hired by the state to assess vaccine distribution, found that the gap is growing due to vaccination centers moving to rural areas of Missouri and away from the more densely populated urban areas. This limits vaccine access to those with flexible time, money and transportation.

Though the vaccine is theoretically free and accessible, many people can not afford to drive far away or take time off work for the vaccination. This is evidenced by the over 7,000 vaccinations that have gone to waste in rural Missouri vaccination centers, according to The Missouri Department of Public Safety. The state government attempts to combat this obstacle by introducing a "Get a Ride" section on their vaccination site; however, when surveying the options, most are either cost-prohibitive or entirely unfeasible. For example, two of the main options listed are public transportation (which is limited to within the city) and ride sharing (which is very costly even within the city, let alone outside of it). This systematically disadvantages socioeconomic minorities, many of whom have technical eligibility but no access to the vaccine.

Furthermore, these disparities are not limited to Missouri; they are nationwide. The Kaiser Family Foundation compiled data from across states and found a consistent trend of Black and Hispanic people receiving a smaller share of vaccines in proportion to

their COVID-19 death toll. Even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find that Black and Hispanic populations have suffered 34% of the deaths due to COVID-19, they make up a mere five and eight percent of vaccinations, respectively. In fact, the vaccination rate for white Americans is double that of Black and Hispanic Americans. Though the exact reason for this rampant disparity varies from state to state, this trend unequivocally reflects an urgent need for more equitable vaccine distribution—in Missouri and nationwide.

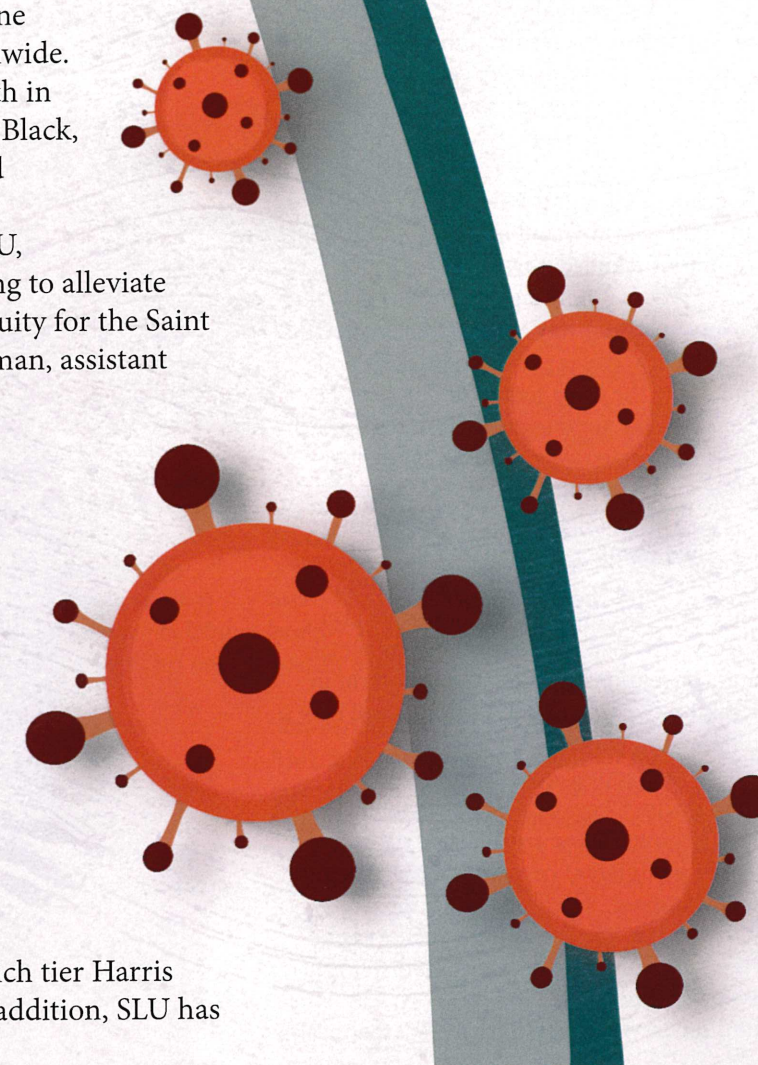
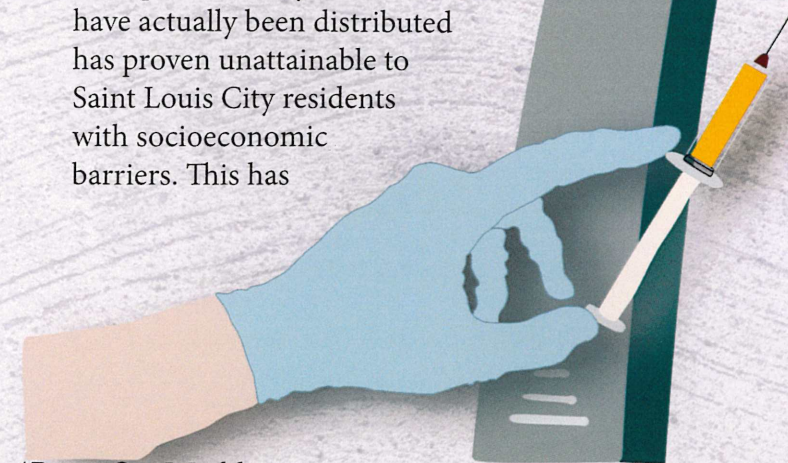
The need for vaccinations both in urban centers like Saint Louis and to Black, Hispanic and other under-vaccinated communities is evident. Naturally, it becomes important to ask: how is SLU, with its social justice mission, working to alleviate the vaccine disparity and increase equity for the Saint Louis community? Dr. Deborah Artman, assistant professor in the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing, is one of the leaders in the vaccine distribution efforts at SLU. Dr. Artman said the university is actively working to provide vaccines both to SLU students and the surrounding communities.

For example, since Harris Stowe University does not currently have the capacity to vaccinate their students and staff, SLU is assisting the neighboring campus. SLU has designed and disseminated a survey, similar to the one that its own students took, to determine which tier Harris Stowe students and staff fall into. In addition, SLU has

had and will continue to have vaccine clinics. One such clinic held on March 27, 2021 aimed to vaccinate approximately 200 members of the Beloved Methodist United Church, a predominantly Black church.

Dr. Artman mentioned that SLU is planning to host more clinics and form additional community partnerships once they have the vaccinations and the capacity. Though SLU alone cannot alleviate the vaccination disparities in Missouri, the university is striving to uphold their commitment to social justice and support the greater Saint Louis community. Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson will continue to be brought up in conversation as more SLU students and staff get vaccinated. Though it should be a right, getting vaccinated has largely become a privilege in Saint Louis: where transportation, wealth and time can determine one's

accessibility to life-saving medicine. Though individual action cannot fix the systemic barriers that create vaccine disparities, we can play our part in raising awareness and spreading information to our communities.



THE WEIGHT OF HEALTH



Catherine Lund-Molfese

She/Her

First-Year

Leadership and Human
Resources Management

As of this article's creation in early March 2021, the top video when "healthy" is searched on TikTok is a weight loss video featuring a lemonade-like drink that is supposed to allow the viewer to lose 10 pounds in just a week. The second most popular video under the "health" hashtag features an exercise designed to deliver "a flat stomach and toned abs in just ten days." The #healthybody page is inundated with fitness and workout videos.

This doesn't mean that there are not creators promoting other healthy body types: Massive progress has been made in the past few years toward normalizing all bodies and recognizing different body types. However, there is definitely still a bias in society toward the thinner, more toned figures.

When searching for similar hashtags on Instagram, the results were even less varied. The top posts were either diet recipes or pictures of extremely toned bodies. Forbes's list of the top seven highest earning TikTok accounts includes names like Addison Rae, Loren Grey and Michael Lee. What do all of these in-demand influencers have in common? A toned physique.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to look a certain way and, in general, being physically active is good for the body and mind. On the other hand, exercise and dieting—like anything else—can become toxic if obsessed over or taken up in unhealthy amounts.

The media perpetually portrays a limited number of body shapes and types as "healthy." Although "attractive," "healthy," "skinny" and "fit" are often and incorrectly used interchangeably by social and conventional media, it is important to focus on their version of healthy—and how it differs from reality.

"Attractive" is an adjective that is subjective and defined in distinct ways by every individual. Health is a little easier to define, although there are different paths to get there and it looks different on different people. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary lists a number of definitions for the words "health" and "healthy," including "the condition of being sound in body, mind or spirit," "free from disease" and "not displaying clinical signs of disease or infection."

The first definition draws attention to the fact that health

is not a purely physical attribute; mental and physical health are closely related and equally important. Notice how none of these definitions say anything about what a healthy person should look like. None of them mention visible muscles, a small waist or a slight figure. While people with these three characteristics can be healthy, being healthy does not mandate having these characteristics. Health does not just have one appearance; it can come in as many shapes, sizes and colors as there are people.

"The Truth about Fat," an episode of NOVA that aired on PBS, sheds some light on the importance of body fat and the way it is misunderstood in regard to its relationship with health. The segment broke down how body fat contributes to a person's overall health, as well as why an absence of fat is not ideal for a healthy body.

Many Sumo wrestlers would be classified as obese due to their body mass indexes (BMI); however, they do not suffer from conditions normally associated with their size. NOVA found that this is due to all the exercise that their career demands. Their active lifestyles cause their fat to sit under their skin, away from their core of muscles and vital organs. In their case, although they have large amounts of body fat, they are completely healthy physically. They are a great example of how impossible it is to judge the health of a person based on their appearance, while serving as a contrasting—but more accurate—view from how we usually view the relationship between size and health.



The episode goes on to explain, with the help of doctors and expert researchers, that not having enough body fat leads to osteoporosis, where weakened bones face higher tendencies of breakage, as well as reproductive troubles. Body fat cushions bones and joints, and keeps them protected; without it, bones have more stress on them and will become frail. But the human brain also knows how much fat is in its body. This effects reproductive health because if the amount is too low, the brain will shut down reproductive capabilities in order to conserve fuel. The episode examined how in hunter-gatherer communities—the way all societies used to be—body fat protects humans who do not know where their next meal will come from. The extra layer is insurance against hunger and ensures a longer life.

Fat gets a lot of hate that it does not deserve; it is a misunderstood, but essential, part of health. One huge reason why there is so much misinformation surrounding the relationship of weight to health is due to bias and a lack of education. Schools teach kids, to some degree, which foods are healthy for them and what choices are best for their well-being. However, kids develop an image of health in their heads, and are led to believe that eating the recommended foods will make them look like it. There is no instruction of what healthy looks like physically as far as body shape, so they are left to assume that the slim figures they see on magazine covers or in movies are their goal.

Health classes in schools do encourage activity, but usually with the goal of losing fat or maintaining weight. They do not teach kids the importance of fat in their bodies or the fact that health cannot be measured at a glance. It does not help that many parents and even doctors are misinformed as well. Doctors refer to the BMI chart to determine whether a patient's size is underweight, "healthy," overweight or obese. But the chart is simply a mathematical ratio of weight to height; it is not a measure of health. It is unable to measure muscle composition, pregnancy or disease: all things that affect weight.

Dr. Herbert Shmerling, a senior faculty editor for Harvard Health Publishing, states that many people who have a high or low BMI are healthy and, on the other end, many with a "healthy" BMI are unhealthy. He also shares that "more than half of those considered overweight by BMI had a healthy 'cardiometabolic profile,' including a normal blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar." BMI can be a helpful tool, but it is not a measure of health and should not be relied on to indicate whether a person's weight is acceptable.

Society's portrayal of fat or being "overweight" as something completely separate from, and even the enemy of, health is not accurate and it is detrimental, especially to young people. It encourages many people with perfectly healthy bodies to think that they do not look the way they should or that they are not healthy enough. Body image issues contribute to mental health, relationships and daily life.

There are videos on TikTok with hundreds of thousands of likes where teens show pictures of the tiny, curvy or toned bodies that they think they are supposed to look like and cite them as

the reason for their insecurities. Seeing one body type highly promoted as the ideal, and finding that it does not match their own, is hurtful and alienating to many young people. It causes confidence to plummet and insecurities to soar, and contributes to body dysmorphia, eating disorders and anxiety.

Luckily, there are many people working to combat this idea that a flat stomach is a necessary attribute for a healthy body. Health at Every Size (HAES) is a movement created by author Lindo Bacon. They have published several books about the misunderstanding of the relationship between weight and health. Their website describes the HAES movement as a "paradigm that is committed to advancing social justice and respecting the diversity of human bodies (including, explicitly, larger bodies)."

HAES offers a community of people who support healthy bodies of all sizes, as well as a list of resources including organizations, blogs and programs of their own that are oriented toward health and body acceptance.

Mik Zazon, known as @mikkzazon on TikTok, devotes her videos to promoting the acceptance and validity of all bodies, especially "tummies." Kenny Ethan Jones, @kennyethanjones on Instagram, uses his platform to share how his relationship with his body has improved over time as a transgender man. These social media figures are just a couple examples—many others are working to encourage love and respect for the human body in all of its beautiful forms.

Finding and following someone you like who represents and validates your specific body type is helpful. It is extremely important to remember that social media—TikTok especially—tends to trap us in our own little bubble of what it thinks we want to see. Be conscious of the social media atmosphere you find yourself in and the ways that it affects you.

There are many unique, healthy and beautiful body types, but the fact that

any one of them may engage in extreme eating, dieting and exercise in an effort to measure up to what they think is "healthy" is actually sad. Despite the misunderstanding surrounding the topic, body fat is not the enemy: it protects us and is part of a healthy body. It is impossible to tell from their appearance how healthy a person is.

Education needs to improve in regard to the relationship between health and weight, particularly in the understanding of BMI. It is not an accurate tool for measuring health; it is simply a mathematical formula that can provide a ratio of height to weight. Society should be more focused on strength and function in the human body than on how they look. Humans come in all shapes, sizes and colors—similar to flowers. People don't tell the flowers that they are less deserving of acceptance because they are big or small; people deserve to see themselves the same way. You deserve to see yourself that way.



Cultural Preservation Amid Imperialist Borders: A Look into Badakhshan's Autonomy



Anushah Sajwani

She/Her

Junior

Political Science &
International Studies

Picture this: you are lying on top of Art Hill with your makeshift picnic (to-go food from a classic restaurant in Tower Grove). You use the rare sighting of sunshine in February as a mood-amplifier, while the midwestern winds simultaneously embrace your body and blow the crumbs off of your piece of gooey butter cake.

Going about your normal St. Louisan activities, you are met with alarms, tanks and a sudden warning; as of today, you now have restricted access from entering many St. Louis neighborhoods that resemble the beautiful midwestern culture you have come to love in your dear city. You can no longer freely roam Forest Park as you once used to and you need to apply for a permit at your local embassy in order to go to Cherokee Street—despite it being literally down the road, and supporting its local establishments being a family tradition.

The worst part about this abrupt shift in an area where your family has lived for generations is that these borders were instated by someone who has no relation to St. Louis or knowledge of little things you love about your city. This border creator is not even from St. Louis—say, a Canadian even. These new borders impede your ability to venture out to cultural hubs in your city, limiting your future generations' knowledge of their community's roots.

These restrictions also force loyal customers of small businesses to stop supporting these classic spots that make up St. Louis food culture, and small-locally owned businesses fail to make ends meet. Not only do these borders cause a generational decline in the community's traditions and cultures, but many attractions and landmarks that played vital roles in creating the culture of your region suddenly no longer exist—with economic instability trailing behind.

A sudden shift in free movement and abrupt restrictions on fueling a local economy are only some of

the outcomes that autonomous regions face. Autonomous regions are pockets of land typically occupied by Indigenous or minority ethnic groups who seek independence (yet, might have some self-governance) from the human-made countries their regions are located in, according to Lucas I. González in "Political Power, Fiscal Crises, and Decentralization in Latin America." These are like political islands: landlocked and threatened by the majority on the outside.

In these regions, surrounding nations and greedy imperialists constantly bicker over taking control of the lands that minorities and their ancestral roots are located in—with no respect for the community's livelihood. These outside forces have no remorse for the turmoil they employ in the land, by attempting to cleanse the region of minority cultural and spiritual identities. In our metaphor, your beloved St. Louis has become someone else's stomping ground; but this is a very watered down version of how autonomous regions come to be. The reality is that there are many more gruesome acts—ethnic cleansing, civil war, mutilation—that intersect during the creation of an autonomous region.

The St. Louis analogy—again, an extremely reductive example—showcases how harmful restrictions on free movement can be. In autonomous regions worldwide, these restrictions can prevent future generations of Indigenous minorities from understanding their cultural identities—from ancestral spiritual beliefs to ethnolinguistics—while also wreaking havoc on the economic stability of the community. This is what has happened to Badakhshan—a rural, mountainous region located in the heart of the Pamir Mountains—where newly created countries (Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan) share an occupied space in a region belonging to varied Pamiri ethnic groups.

Not only are these ethnic groups indigenous to Badakhshani land, but this region itself is saturated with historical and visually stunning cultural practices. White whirling gowns contrast with the red-threaded patterns embellished along the seams of traditional Pamiri dance outfits. The intricate threaded patterns are sewn by hand, with each woven technique enhancing the vibrancy of the red patterns. The increased tempo in music guides the dancer into exerting faster swirling motions, expanding

the bottom hems of the gown into a perfect circle. The white base and red-threaded embroidery contrast in the air, creating a color palette seen only when the fast-tempoed circular motions are in place. The intensification of music and swirling motions transcend the dancer into an esoteric state of peace, as if they are intoxicated by the ample amount of divine tranquility seeped through their bloodstream, as they become connected with the earthly elements around them.

Musicality is prevalent in all functions of Pamiri society, since it serves as a source for both meditation and celebration. From religious events and weddings to students praising the end of their final exams, one can commonly find the joyous, rhythmic movements of dance and the earthly sounds of Central Asian instruments at all Pamiri functions.

Dance and music together provide an emotional, psychological and spiritual release from everyday problems. Each movement and sound is correlated in accordance to energy flows; each beat trembles within oneself, allowing for the flow of internal energy to reach all points of the body, making oneself feel balanced. A source of bewilderment for many medical ethnomusicologists, dance and music are sacred to the Pamiri people and their tradition.

The arts are not only exemplified through cultural appreciation, but are also a source of spiritual connection. Throughout the world's regions, where there is a predominant ethnic minority group, there is commonly a correlating minority religious or spiritual practice that is affiliated with all members of the community. This is true to Badakhshan, where everyone in this region practices Shia Imami Nizari Ismailism: the religion I practice as well.

Ismailism is a spiritual branch of Shia Islam. The Ismaili community is a small one, but is closely linked to minority ethnic group identities, such as Pamiris and their sister ethnic group the Khojas (my ethnic group). In autonomous regions such as Badakhshan, the Indigenous peoples' sacred cultural ceremonies and communal spaces are subjected to division by imperialists.

For ethnic and religious minorities living in autonomous regions, community gatherings that serve as a source of devotional rejuvenation become disrupted by the forceful separation through man-made borders. Members of the same group are no longer able to cherish communal events that are sacred to their identities in a large-scale community setting like they once were able to. Local artisans and farmers that created their family's living wage on bazaar sales are also restricted from regions where they once sold their goods, or are only allowed in their neighboring countries' borders through permits—rather than the original ability of free flow.

This is not because of animosity between the region's occupants, but rather the ignorance of imperial forces.

Imperialists invaded surrounding regions of Badakhshan, while also picking apart the region itself. They then included it into the newly created countries of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The imperialists' greedy efforts to take over land bountiful with natural resources disrupted the independence of Badakhshan and caused the creation of unjust borders that separated a region belonging to the Indigenous community of Pamiris, halting the free-movement of Indigenous inhabitants in their own region.

The war atrocities incited by imperialists established national borders between Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Currently, non-Badakhshani monitor the border, mandate order and intimidate residents, according to the Human Rights Watch. These are imperialist strategies to repress Pamiri autonomy and restrict their movement across borders.

Even the internationally recognized name of this region has been changed to a name given by the imperialists themselves: Badakhshan's internationally recognized title is Gorno-Badakhshan-Autonomous-Region (GBAO), but this is not the name declared by the inhabitants of the region themselves. Even something as personally patriotic as the name of the region has been remade in accordance with non-Indigenous jargon.

The least we, non-Badakhshan residents, can do is shed light on the original name of this region: Badakhshan. This is one effort that can be done to advocate for cultural conservation of Indigenous heritages that fear the extermination of their communities' cultural and spiritual identities.

The brave and courageous efforts made by the Pamiris in preserving their land is what led to the region being recognized as an autonomous one, years after imperialists drew the borders. Normalizing culturally-appropriate terminology and educating oneself on the presence of these Indigenous identities is a means of sustaining competency and honoring these cultures. It is important to spread awareness on the presence and sacrisy of these identities; cultural extermination has wiped out centuries worth of traditions and knowledge before, and it can do it again.

ALTERNATIVES TO ABUSE

Reducing Animal Experimentation And Consumption



Sara Parikh

She/Her
First-Year
Bioethics

Freshman biology is often a student's first introduction to the use of animals for the purpose of science education. However, we never questioned the ethics behind animal experimentation for science lessons that students probably forgot within the next month.

Similarly, we ignore the life before meat by referring to dead cows and pigs as beef and pork. Having a lower-than-human intelligence does not change the fact that non-human animals are incredibly emotional and perceptive beings, who are highly responsive to pain and their surroundings. Understanding animal sentience can encourage awareness and respect toward non-human species, as well as garner support for the reduction of animal use in experimentation and food consumption.

The selective discrimination of animals is called speciesism, which is the belief that some animals are superior to others. This is why some cultures eat dog corpses and others keep them as pets. As a result of speciesism, we treat animals and nature as lifeless tools, designed to fit what humans want. Laboratories can buy baby pigs without a pancreas or mice with Alzheimer's, according to Susan Kopp and Charles Camosy's "Animals 2.0: A veterinarian and a theologian survey a brave new world of biotechnology." On factory farms, we inject animals with hormones that make parts of their bodies larger and more marketable.

The face of animal use in food has vastly diverted from being the natural process it once was. In the past, according to an article from The Guardian, one animal body could feed, dress and supply a whole family. Meat was a respected luxury. Today, a look into slaughterhouses reveals the horrific torture endured by highly sentient animals under a mechanical system that is far from natural.

According to an undercover slaughterhouse investigator and writer for The Doe, employees turn into robots who have perfected methods of shackling 24 chickens per minute. Alongside the obvious physical pain felt while they are being murdered, animals used for food suffer emotional torment. For example, according to Farm Sanctuary's Gene Baur, animal cries can be heard while animals see their companions dying or a mother sees her child for just a few minutes before he is taken by veal producers who bid on calves while their umbilical cords are

still attached.

The animal agriculture industry is closely tied to our health care crisis. While innocent blood is being shed, the environment and human health are collapsing. Meat consumption is linked to declining human health, Baur finds, through the hormones in animal products. Additionally, animal exploitation threatens human health, through the disease and byproducts that enter our water.

Baur found that toxic chemicals and waste from the food industry are polluting bodies of water and killing aquatic life. Cities are being drained of rivers and aquifers, as the demand for more land to raise animals continues to grow. According to Baur, cattle slaughterhouses use between 250,000 and 550,000 gallons of water each day. Poultry plants use even more, at about 1.5 million gallons per day, or about six gallons per bird.

Completely banning consumption of animals is unreasonable, as meat is currently easily accessible, holds cultural value to many and has become a commodity that humans feel entitled to eat everyday. The solution to reducing meat consumption lies in making vegetarian foods more accessible, regulating meat production and educating the public about cooking and healthy eating. Senator Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) recognized this when, in regard to cattle production's negative effect on carbon emission, she said that "maybe we shouldn't be eating a hamburger for breakfast, lunch, and dinner."

This is easier said than done. In today's unnatural world, vegan and vegetarian foods are highly inaccessible to lower-income individuals. To combat inaccessibility of expensive foods, a study in "The Public Health Effects of Food Deserts" found that lowering the prices of healthier foods and increasing the prices of unhealthy foods increased the purchases of healthier food, while profits remained the same.

The same concept can be applied by lowering the prices of vegan and vegetarian foods while increasing the prices of some meats. Reducing the demand of meat would have numerous benefits, as people would have greater access to healthier foods while being able to indulge in meats occasionally.

Encouraging supermarkets to carry more environmentally friendly and vegetarian foods is essential to ending exploitative animal consumption. But there are several barriers keeping this from happening. Most predominantly, according to Mashable, supermarkets are hesitant to open in lower-income areas because of stigmas regarding food stamps, security and crime.

If these capitalist barriers could be removed, farmer's markets and community gardens can be brought into low-income neighborhoods. Authors of "The Public

Health Effects of Food Deserts" found that the sustainability of local efforts in lower-income communities depended on government support that incentivized the purchase of fresh produce from local farmers and funded the implementation of local markets; education about growing and cooking food increases job opportunities and gives community members greater access to better foods.

But exploitative animal consumption does not just come from what we eat—modern science is built on the abuse of animals through clinical trials and medicinal testing. Animals used in research live painful lives deprived of any dignity or liberty. The process of studying primate brains is invasive and leaves permanent damages, including death, as chunks of skull bone, brain matter, facial structures and eyeballs are removed while the primate is alive according to Jinjing Fan from Neural Regeneration Research.

According to Fordham University's social ethics professor Charles Camosy, primates demonstrate self-awareness and anticipation of the future, revealing that they are completely aware of the life and potential they have lost while abused in a research facility. Other highly intelligent animals, such as unadopted dogs and cats, pigs, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs and rabbits are also subject to this mistreatment.

Even if pain was mitigated through anesthesia, if the animal survives, they are left permanently mutilated, incapable of their natural athleticism and with reminders of the emotional pain suffered. When they are finally disposed of, they have known nothing outside of pain.

Animal testing comes with drawbacks outside of just animal abuse. For example, animal experimentation is very expensive due to requirements for trained manpower, time consuming protocols, breeding, housing and more, according to Sonali K. Doke and Shashikant C. Dhawale in "Alternatives to animal testing: A review." Limiting the use of animals in research through alternative methods would be much more cost effective.

Additionally, Doke and Dhawale argue that animals as test subjects are often ineffective because there is no perfect way to keep them in a controlled environment. Animals used in labs are subject to high levels of stress and discomfort, resulting in hormonal imbalances and thus, resulting in skewed research. Aysha Akhtar's "The Flaws and Human Harms of Animal Experimentation" from the Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics found that there is also a difference in disease reaction, physiology and genetics between species of animals that can lead to misleading results which most often fail in human trials. In fact, most of the time animal testing leads to inconclusive results as 96% of tests on animals are ineffective. Akhtar also found that the excessive amount of waste produced through animal testing can compromise public health, the environment and biodiversity.

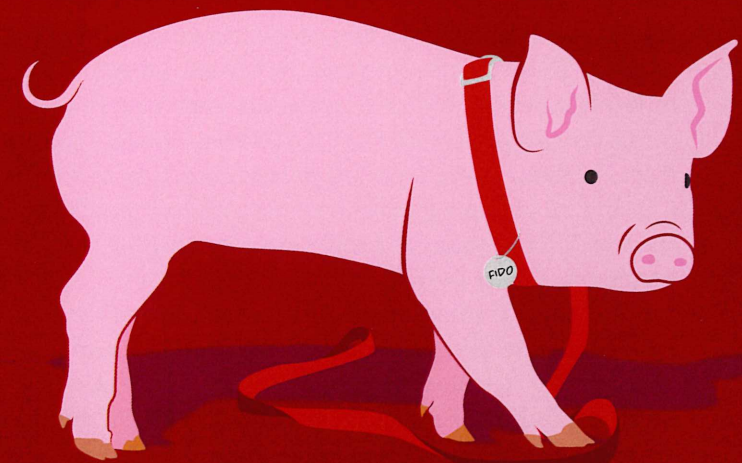
Several alternatives to animal experimentation can be implemented to reduce the body count and cultivate more ethical and cost-effective research. First, the in-vitro method of testing involves the isolation of tissue and cell cultures from animals and humans. In-vitro techniques are easy to follow, less time consuming and less expensive,

which makes them especially efficient for toxicity testing. In parts of Europe, certain types of toxicity testing on animals are completely banned because of the high effectiveness of alternative methods, according to The Humane Society Institute for Science and Policy.

Computer and physical models provide a promising way to replace the use of dead animals in the classroom. A research study conducted by Western Michigan University Medical School compares the dissection and prosection test scores of students. Dissection is when each student actively cuts and mutates the animal, while prosection is a pre-cut model such as a cadaver that can be reused. The study found that students revealed no significant difference between the two methods of studying anatomy, revealing that dissection in education contributes to the unnecessary deaths of millions of animals for no benefit to students and the future of medicine.

Currently, animal testing is an industry standard. To ensure ethical treatment of animal test subjects now—while we work to transition to a better system—laboratories must be monitored and regulated to prevent inhumane treatment of animals used in research. This is why the Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (AWA) was passed. The act, which protects researchers and animals from unhealthy conditions, has major flaws. Its vague terminology allows plenty of room for inadequate implementation of the AWA, ultimately enabling neglect of animal lives. In fact, the AWA's originated not to protect animals, but to protect the human owners of animals, as it was enacted to primarily prevent companion animals from being stolen from their human owners, according to Katharine M. Swanson's "Carte Blanche for Cruelty: The Non-Enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act" from the University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform.

More action needs to be taken to protect the lives of animals. This requires us to be actively aware of the damage that is being done. After becoming cognizant of the abundance of animal abuse in consumption and experimentation, we need to start implementing solutions. It should not be an extremist approach to advocate for animals' lives. Simply revisiting many of our laws and procedures can drastically reduce the number of bodies used in the pursuit of scientific advancement. We can bridge the gap between the human world and the environment by treating the other animals that walk on this planet with more compassion and dignity.



TO ESCAPE



Cate Simon
She/Her
Sophomore
Neuroscience

Whether it is Regency London in the early 1800s or the 1960s Cold War Era, period dramas like “Bridgerton” and “The Queen’s Gambit” transport their audiences, myself included, right into the time period that their show encapsulates. In the current environment, with COVID-19 present and exigent, I have come to appreciate a film or book that is able to pull my mind away from the everyday difficulties the pandemic presents, and into another world.

Although I prefer that to be the case for myself, others may prefer a more cathartic experience seeing characters in films or books experience the same hardships that are present in the audience’s life. As COVID-19 is incorporated into current shows being filmed as well as future movies, TV shows and documentaries, it is important to reflect on the responsibility the film industry has to ethically and respectfully incorporate the pandemic into their films and acknowledge the effects it may have on the audience’s mental health.

Through COVID-19, many groups of people are finding themselves in similar situations and have been able to build connections and support systems with one another. These connections, mostly virtual, allow people to feel less alone in a time of isolation, even with each person’s experience with COVID-19 being vastly different from the next. Therefore, each person’s reaction to viewing COVID-19 on the big screen, with characters emulating the real-life responses of people experiencing life in a pandemic, differs as well.

The TV shows managing filming during the pandemic have the option to reflect COVID-19 and its precautions on screen, or not do so at all. I believe it has an all-or-nothing principle behind it; COVID-19 should

be represented in all its forms or not at all. For the people who look to TV shows to have their feelings and emotions validated, the effort to include the pandemic in its entirety cannot be lacking or inadequate. This applies to medical shows such as “Grey’s Anatomy” and “The Good Doctor,” as well as sitcoms like “Superstore” and dramas, including “This Is Us,” who have committed to the choice of reflecting the pandemic in their plot. Characters wear masks, endure symptoms and stand six feet apart.

TV shows set in the medical world, with scenes taking place in hospitals, have the greater responsibility to bring COVID-19 into the plot, as no hospital has been left unaffected by the pandemic and our health care workers have been tirelessly saving the lives of many. It seems only acceptable to realistically contextualize and validate the health care world’s current situation to their best ability, rather than giving COVID-19 a mere one-time acknowledgement.

As aforementioned, each person’s experience, along with their mental health, has been affected differently as a result of COVID-19 and quarantine, one example being a great difference

between health care workers and the rest of the working world. Out of respect for the workers facing the extreme impacts of the virus, recreation of their work should be done correctly, and in no way downplayed.

On the other hand, for non-medical dramas and sitcoms, there is no fine line of whether or not COVID-19 should be integrated into the storyline. By incorporating COVID-19 into its plot, shows such as “Superstore” and “This is Us” reflect the “new normal” of a simple grocery run and its essential workers. The everyday lives of average people—whether customers or employees—is depicted with respect and nuance. The show’s creators made the decision to bring the pandemic into the show, and now the after effects will begin to surface.

As we think about time period dramas or comedic relief sitcoms as a form of escapism, we also need to understand their impacts on a person’s mental health. “Bridgerton,” a period drama set in the 1800s in high society London, England, takes its viewers back in time, a



OR TO FACE

COVID-19 IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

time where COVID-19 did not exist. But the actors experience the pandemic behind the scenes, while putting on a show that simply does not have the ability to bring such an experience into the plot.

In an interview with Good Morning America, “Bridgerton” actor Regé-Jean Page revealed the show’s attempts to appeal to the audience through the intimate and interpersonal emotions the show encapsulates, full of physical interaction and social connections, in a world where people are at a loss for both. Seeing these emotions exaggerated on screen serves as an opening for the audience to take a part of the emotions into their own life. A true escapist show done well can be an outlet for one who needs a break and some relief from the world around them, positively influencing their mental health.

For others, a show like this may become a form of avoidance, taking away from learning to cope with the current situation the world is in, and as a result, negatively impacting a person’s mental health. There is no way to anticipate how an audience may respond to a show before it is created and streamed everywhere.

During quarantine, where the amount of in-person conversation and social interaction is lessened, a person needs to recognize the media their mind is absorbing. Identifying what truths and benefits are attained from watching the show can help viewers understand how these films are truly impacting them.

The audience can influence the active film industry in guiding the creators to what the people want to see, and what is best for the people in this moment. A person may want a TV show to encapsulate them into a world outside their own, but not feel any distrust against a show who is actively trying to represent current people in the pandemic. Members of the film industry have chosen to represent COVID-19 on screen and, while not everyone may prefer seeing their life displayed in such a way, others can see the characters as models exemplifying ways for people to process emotions in the difficult time we are in. Dr. Drea Lamenti, a clinical psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles Resilience Center believes that TV shows can encourage people to “seek help and emotional literacy.” If a film holds the authority and influence to push a person toward recognition and ways to cope with their emotions in a time where interpersonal relationships are at a loss to offer the same support, the film industry should

recognize this.

This change to TV shows and movies is not going away any time soon. Bobette Buster, a professor of the practice of storytelling at Northeastern University, anticipates that as we move forward, people will be eager to see which shows will manage through the setbacks the pandemic has to offer.. What will the comeback for the film industry be like? How will its responsibility change when ethically and respectfully incorporating COVID-19 into future films?

When it comes down to escapism with a TV show, set of movies or a book, there is no universal line to cross between avoidance versus coping. For each person and their individual background, many factors accumulate into their thoughts for what they hope to see as they pick up their TV remote.

INCOME TOGETHER



Alfredo Mac Laughlin

He/Him

First-Year

Psychology

In the past few decades, income and wealth inequality in the United States has grown to staggering heights. According to Inequality.org, in 2018 the top 0.1% of Americans earned 196 times more than the bottom 90%. Similarly, the top 0.1% of Americans in 2016 had an average household wealth of over \$100 million, while the bottom 40% of households averaged over \$8,000 in debt.

The division between the socioeconomic classes is drawn starkly across racial lines, with the median white family having a net worth 25 times that of the median Latino family and 50 times that of the median Black family, according to Inequality.org. The wealth gap comes with a feedback loop; those in poverty cannot afford the education that could lead to a job with a higher salary, transportation to increase job opportunities or other resources that could allow them to increase their income and accrue wealth.

In the quest to alleviate poverty, some have begun to look at the possibility of instituting a universal basic income (UBI). UBI, though diversely defined by many, largely means consistent, unconditional payments made by the government directly to all of its individual citizens. 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful, Andrew Yang, proposed a national UBI in the form of an unconditional \$1,000 payment every month to every adult American citizen, which he called the “Freedom Dividend.” Although Yang did not receive the Democratic nomination, his campaign brought UBI onto the floor of the debate stage and into the public consciousness.

This would prove increasingly relevant as COVID-19 emerged; unemployment soared, and in March 2020 the U.S. government released \$2,000 stimulus checks directly to a large percentage of Americans, in an unprecedented social welfare measure. They released \$600 checks in December 2020, and in March 2021 followed this up with \$1,400 direct deposits. This could set the framework for UBI. These payments meet the unconditional and direct criteria of UBI, but lack the universal facet. To qualify for the latest payment, one must be a single person with an adjusted gross income of no more than \$75,000, the head of a household making no more than \$112,500 or a married couple filing jointly earning no more \$150,000.

Estimates for the cost of instituting UBI vary

widely, but are generally placed somewhere between two and four trillion dollars. Many have proposed that funding would come from cutting existing welfare programs and diverting their funds to UBI. Mandatory spending, the funds allotted to projects established under authorization laws, requires that Congress allocate all funds necessary to keep those projects running. This spending consists of \$2.966 trillion for the 2021 fiscal year, as estimated by the Office of Management and Budget. Mandatory spending programs include Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other safety net programs. The most expensive estimates for UBI would require another trillion dollars in funding, even after consolidating all social welfare programs.

Supporters of UBI, Yang included, argue that the influx of cash will stimulate the economy. Because people have money, they will spend money—and some of that money will be paid to the government in taxes. It is argued that more people will be able to afford healthier food and homes, as well as avoid resorting to criminal activities to make a living: reducing government spending on healthcare, housing services and incarceration. The resulting population would then be physically and mentally healthier, and thus more productive—further stimulating economic growth. These gains could offset the costs of UBI in the long run, or at least make its other proposed benefits worth the increased taxes.

Those who stand against UBI maintain that it would lead to a massive reduction of the labor force, as people choose to live solely off of their government subsidy. This is known as the “poverty trap.” I believe the opposite is true. UBI cash payouts do not discourage work, but rather allow people to seek out more fulfilling work. People will no longer be locked into jobs they find unsatisfying, and instead are able to dedicate themselves to work they enjoy, causes they feel passionate about or the experiences required to qualify for higher paying or more engaging jobs. It will decrease worker exploitation, as employees will be able to quit jobs with exceedingly low wages and poor conditions without sending themselves into poverty and risking starvation.

Current welfare programs create their own poverty trap through means tested programs: solutions that diminish aid as income increases or only provide assistance to those with assets below a certain cap. As reported in Commonweal Magazine, revoking assistance once someone reaches a certain income or accrues a certain level of assets discourages them from aggregating wealth. UBI needs to be unconditional, so that people are ensured support regardless of their income bracket.

Many support UBI as the solution to increased automation. Brookings Institute, a centrist think tank, held an event on the analysis of automation in 2019, in which they found that one in every four jobs faces a high risk of displacement due to automation by 2030. From automated assembly lines to self-checkout options at fast food restaurants, entry-level jobs are already being automated, and technological developments geared toward replacing the human labor force show no signs of stopping. Proponents of UBI argue that it is a necessary safety net for those who will lose their jobs due to automation. This argument holds extra credibility in the wake of the stimulus package passage, in part because of the massive unemployment resulting from the adaptations to the pandemic.

But UBI is not only a solution for unprecedented public health crises; it can fix systemic inequality. Paul Tough’s “Whatever It Takes: One Man’s Plan to Change Harlem and America” breaks down a number of studies that elucidate the importance of parenting on children’s performance on standardized tests. One study found that the number and type of words spoken to children everyday by their parents had a significant impact on their development and academic success. Others found that parents that were more sensitive and encouraging—and less intrusive and detached—tended to raise children that would receive higher scores on standardized tests. These parents also typically came from higher socioeconomic classes.

These studies indicate that parenting collaborates with wealth to influence a child’s future. UBI would allow parents to spend more time with their children, develop better relationships with them and engage in more meaningful conversations with them, which would improve their academic performance and begin to break the cycle of poverty. Even if one might receive more from current welfare programs than they would from UBI, the work requirements often keep them in jobs with poor work conditions and long hours—leaving them

with little time and less energy to become involved in their kids’ lives.

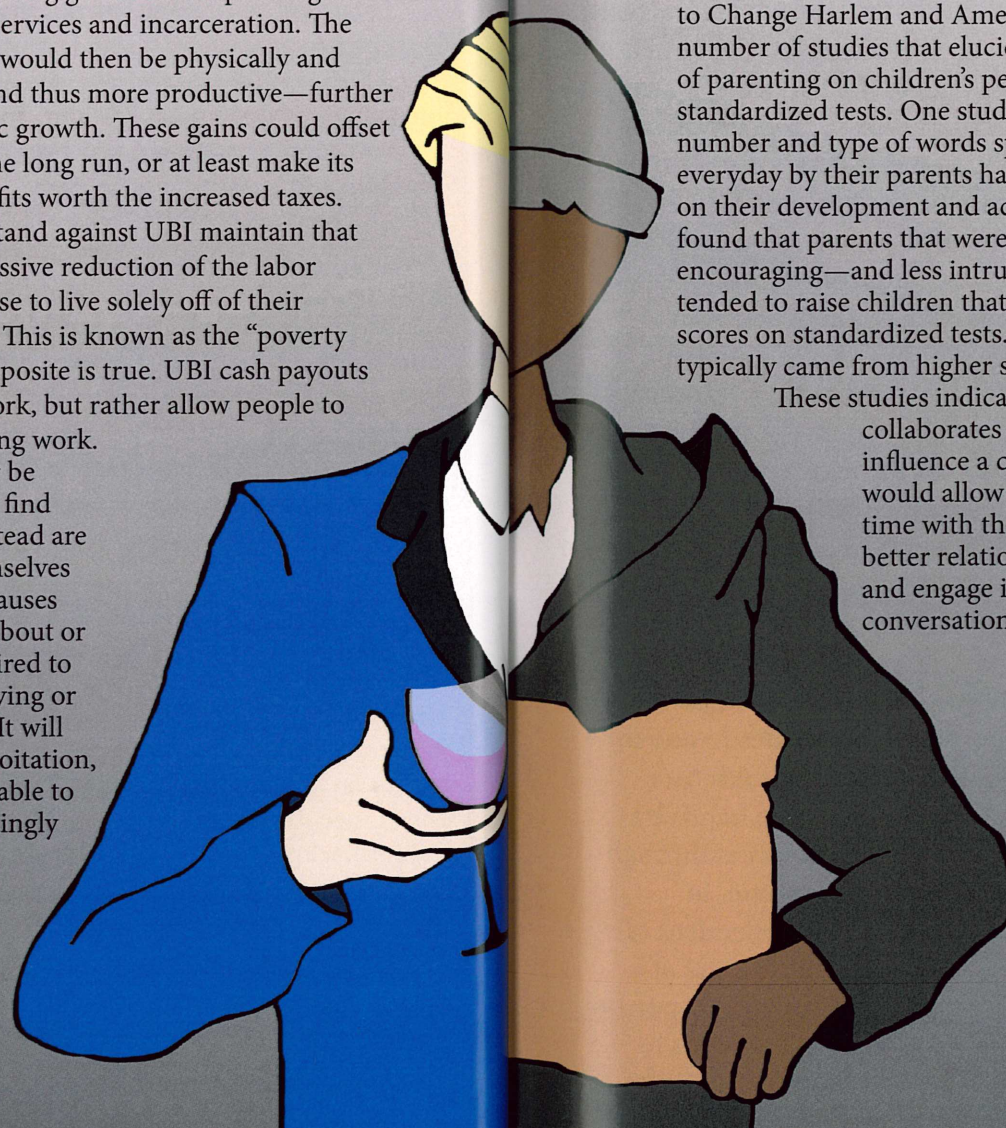
One of the proposed benefits of replacing current welfare programs with UBI is the decrease in bureaucracy and government involvement. Current programs can be intrusive, according to the academic journal Social Work. Certain states have implemented drug testing as a requirement for receiving aid. Some programs even infringe on family formation. People receiving disability benefits lose their benefits if they get married. Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) also tend to be single-parent households, especially among female-headed ones—implying that marriage is a factor in their eligibility criteria. Some programs even terminate assistance if families have more children while receiving aid.

This is a gross infringement on personal liberties and bodily autonomy. Because UBI is given to everyone, it would not limit their freedoms or require an examination into the applicant’s life; it would not even require an application. It is this maximization of freedom that some see as the ultimate benefit of UBI: the ability to spend the money as one chooses and, as such, to live the lifestyle that one chooses. It is for this reason that many prefer UBI over current welfare programs.

The consolidation of the various programs does cause some wariness. The funds provided by a UBI would be relatively small and, in many cases, those who currently receive aid from government programs would receive less if those were replaced by UBI alone. Medicare and Medicaid, which provide healthcare for those over the age of 65 and in poverty, respectively, made up almost half of the federal mandatory spending budget for the 2021 fiscal year. Even the lowest estimates for the cost of UBI would struggle to make the necessary funds without diverting at least some funds from the two programs.

Replacing Medicare, Medicaid and other welfare programs with UBI would not leave much room for error. Any medical emergency or catastrophe could easily send someone back into poverty despite the UBI. Politicians who might otherwise support UBI also fear that consolidating the multiple programs into one might put the remaining program at a greater risk of being gratuitously reduced by opponents of welfare as a whole—as it is easier to cut funds for one program than for several. The consolidation of welfare programs would put both its constituents and itself at risk without much of a safety net.

Instituting UBI is not without risks. Even the best case scenario may not be perfect. However, the current system is clearly not solving the problem of poverty. The situation has only gotten worse under its purview. Now more than ever, with unemployment at a record high, changes must be made. UBI would provide a safety net for the unemployed and raise the majority of the population out of poverty. It would help close the wealth gap and with it reduce social inequalities. Working class laborers would have more bargaining power, as they would not be dependent on exploitative low-income jobs. Perhaps best of all, people would have more freedom. We are the land of the free, after all.



Cutting Down the **Red Tape** in Healthcare



Aman Bassi
He/Him
Sophomore
Public Health

Although many associate the term “red tape” with government, it permeates many other realms of society. The most undermined and unnoticed red tape exists in the medical field. Many elements inhibit a healthcare provider’s ability to give the best possible care they can for the patient and prioritize their needs. Many of the problems stem from healthcare administration, insurance and a general lack of physician autonomy. These barriers are slowly being brought down and overcome through shifts toward private practices, placing medical professionals in administrative positions and teaching healthcare providers various business models.

Red tape at the highest level stems from barriers imposed by insurance companies. One of the ways in which patient care is inhibited is through prior authorization requirements. Prior authorization is the process by which insurance companies review how necessary treatments and medications are, before allowing a patient to receive them. According to Andis Robeznieks, senior news writer for the American Medical Association (AMA), 92% of surveyed physicians believe that prior authorization has a negative impact on healthcare delivery, and according to 62% of them, the impediment is significant.

The reason prior authorization is viewed negatively stems from delayed healthcare for acute problems. It also restricts certain treatments and drugs when insurances decline requests. Robeznieks found that 64% of physicians have reported waiting at least a full day to receive authorization and 80% of physicians have abandoned these tests due to these delays. To combat this issue AMA worked with stakeholders to work on improving the process; In 2016 they established 21 prior authorization principles to help

contribute to continuity in care and make health care streamlined.

Furthermore more problems arise with the administration of health care. The role of administrators is to keep hospitals afloat. However, this inadvertently results in a more quantitative approach to healthcare delivery, as opposed to qualitative one. In other words, there is currently a focus on efficiency and the number of patients a healthcare provider sees more so than the quality of care they receive.

In some medical facilities, this perspective stems from a lack of physicians and health care providers with empirical knowledge in places of power. This results in patients receiving less time with their health care providers, along with more expensive visits, treatments, procedures and medications. Currently, there is an effort to break down the barrier by putting people with hands-on experience, such as physicians, in positions of power. By doing so, the voices of those who actually provide care can be heard and the health care system can become more patient-centric.

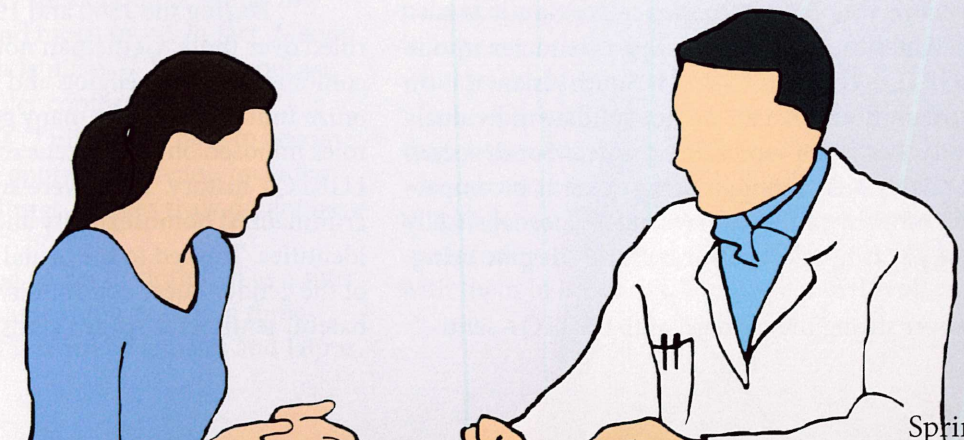
Since insurance and administration consistently loom over medicine, there has been a general lack of autonomy for healthcare providers. Since there is a greater focus on efficiency, physicians work tirelessly to see the most patients possible, in order to maximize profits for the hospital or clinic they work at. This, supplemented with the pandemic, has augmented physician burnout, or the increased feelings of exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, to 64%, according to the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Furthermore, physicians are sometimes unable to provide the holistic care they desire due to time constraints. Some physicians and health care workers are taking matters into their own hands by becoming their own bosses. One such way is through direct primary care and concierge medicine. In these methods, physicians can work independent of insurance and provide personalized health care at a membership cost. This can be done through in-person visits or through telemedicine, allowing patients to

make appointments minutes before they desire to meet and in the convenience of their own home. All the while there are significantly less administrative responsibilities and constraints, which is beneficial for both physicians and their patients.

Similarly, the pandemic exposed the weaknesses in our corporate-driven health care system. Physicians who relied completely on the hospitals for employment were released due to a lack of patients, leaving them with no source of income, according to Shane Harris, Justin Sondel and Gregory S. Schnieder from The Washington Post. To survive the harsh environment during the pandemic, physicians have in turn opened up their own private practices. This essentially makes physicians their own bosses, and prevents them from unnecessary administrative oversight, pressures and costs.

Health care providers can gain insight into the various health care model options while they are training. By becoming more knowledgeable about the business model that best suits them—be it opening their own private direct primary care or traditional practice—they can avoid the red tape associated with the field and therefore thrive as professionals. Most importantly, patients are provided with personalized medical care and accessible options.



Hijras, Hinduism and The History of Gender Identity



Anagha Arla

She/Her

First-Year

Psychology & Sociology

If you ask someone in any western country what the rainbow flag represents, many will let you know that it symbolizes the LGBTQ+ community. However, if you pose the same question to many first generation South Asian immigrants in the United States, the answer is not the same. As a child of South Asian immigrants, I cannot guarantee that my parents—or parents of my friends—would be able to confidently tell you that this is the LGBTQ+ community flag. In fact, I would not be confident in the fact that these adults would even know what LGBTQ+ stands for. And, even if they are growing up in America today, children of these adults might not know what the community is, either.

While gender queerness is much more accepted and understood in non-South Asian westerners, Natasha Roy, a writer for NBC News argues that it is not as well accepted in India, where being queer is regarded as “otherness.” This results in the lack of knowledge and education received by our parents about the LGBTQ+ community. In most Indian films, characters that are homosexual are only seen as the laughing stocks of the movie, or used for more drama in films such as “Dostana,” “Kal Ho Naa Ho” and “Kapoor and Sons.” They are used as entertainment and never represented in the diversity or nuance that the community holds. This leads to many South Asian Americans growing up in households where only mainstream heterosexuality is accepted.

Oftentimes in first generation South Asian families, coming out as anything other than heterosexual can be extremely harmful to individuals and could enact a significant amount of trauma. It is hard to create a path that has not been paved for you. In my experience as a South Asian immigrant in America, I have never seen a character who is part of the LGBTQ+ community and is South Asian; it is no surprise that many South Asians do not validate individuals in a community that is not represented. Queer South Asians can understandably feel as though being queer is incompatible with their ethnicity. I myself have been paternalistically told that being gay is not part of our culture—despite being a proud ally.

However strong the modern anti-LGBTQ+ senti-

ments in South Asian families, they are actually a misconception; it is simply false to believe that gender queer identities are not part of Hinduism or in India. South Asians have a long, storied and sympathetic history of our vibrant and diverse sexuality.

Gender queer identities have been a part of Hinduism since 400 B.C., as evidenced by the Karma Sutra: a Hindu text sharing the pleasures of sexuality. Hijras are the intersex, queer and transgender community of Hinduism. These people have been a part of famous Hindu texts, such as Ramayanam (the story of Rama’s exile to the forest) and Mahabaratam (the battle between Pandavas and Kauravas for the throne of Hastinapura).

Before we really dig deeper into gender queer identities, let us learn more about Hijras. These people compose the intersex, transgender and queer community in India. According to Jeffrey Gettleman from The New York Times, the Hijra community is largely made up of individuals who were assigned male at birth, and then undergo gender confirmation surgery to transition into females or non-binary people. However, not all transgender people are Hijras. This transition also includes adornments of jewelry, hair and clothing.

Before colonization, Hijras were known for their ability to bless or curse individuals. They were invited to baby showers to bless babies with luck and prosperity. They were seen as a symbol of beauty, love and opportunity. During colonization, Hijras were criminalized and demonized and, according to Gettleman, they were unjustly seen as evil abominations of nature.

During the 1800 and 1900s, the British empire ruled over India. Gettleman notes that the monarchy used a combination of its religion and sovereignty as a tool to colonize India. There were many gender, cultural and sexuality roles imposed on the citizens of India that interrupted their LGBTQ+ history. There were laws, such as Section 377, that criminalized homosexuality and penalized gender queer identities. This led to the brutal torture and imprisonment of the gender queer community in India, and eventually hateful sentiments spread across South Asian countries and

and terrorities that still exist to this day.

In 2018, Section 377 of the British penal code in India was struck down in a massive win for human rights: homosexuality can no longer be criminalized by the state. This promotes equal rights for all individuals of the LGBTQ+ community—just as heterosexuals have had forever.

But this especially helps particularly marginalized members of the queer South Asian community; the stories of Hijras, gender queer and non-conforming individuals in the LGBTQ+ community are becoming more mainstream, rather than being kicked to the sidelines. They can share their own narratives and speak up on behalf of themselves. After years of offensive depictions of queer South Asians in the media, decriminalization promises new representation. Now, as acceptance grows, Hijras are slowly returning to the symbol of prosperity, peace and value they were seen before, in texts such as Mahabharata and Ramayanam.

It can be hard to educate oneself on LGBTQ+ history and rights when queer people have been oppressed in mainstream media and marginalized in their own ethnic communities. To improve awareness and education, role models are important. Inspiring, guiding individuals who advocate for LGBTQ+ people and explain how to best support them, role models showcase their identity and share how to be a good ally.

Although it is hard to find role models that speak about such issues, especially considering the polarity of LGBTQ+ topics in South Asian cultures, there are some role models that are helping tear down these barriers. Alok V. Menon is an internationally acclaimed gender queer and non-conforming activist. They speak upon degendering fashion, transgender rights and much more. In fact, Menon was a special guest in Jameela Jamilla’s “I-Weigh” podcast, where the pair discussed gender conformity, trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) and how to become a better ally to those who are oppressed. Menon includes that in many South Asian cultures, clothes truly do not have a specific gender.

In fact, lungis are long pieces of cloth tied as a skirt for men. This is roughly the same thing as saris, a three-pieced article of clothing that is worn by females and Hijras.

Panchas are traditional pants worn by men, similar to lungis for traditional functions. Panchas and patialas are nearly identical kinds of pants that can be worn by males, females and Hijras in South Asia.

Although many South Asian immigrants have assimilated to wearing what is considered the supposed norm in western clothing, it is clear that South Asia’s past included acceptance of communities and ideals that are just starting to be accepted into western cultures today. Menon even talks about how most of these social justice movements of degendering fashion, trans rights and non-binary inclusivity are simply us returning to our South Asian cultures. Recognizing our history of gender queer identities is a return to our South Asian identity.

We know that sexuality was fluid, and accepted in many South Asian cultures and religions—but we are not alone. According to the LGBTQ+ news site, Openly, non-binary and gender queer identities exist in cultures throughout the world, including Two Spirits in the North American Indigenous cultures, Fa’afafine in Samoa, Metis in Nepal, Bugis in Indonesia, Brotherboys and sistergirls in Aboriginal Australia and Toms in Thailand. How do we come back to these roots? How do we unlearn imperialist narratives? How do we honor the history that has always been here?

First and foremost, education and awareness are a must. Do not wait for someone to educate you; educate yourself. We are all busy human beings, but you owe it to both yourself and the world to get educated. Like Menon, Jameela Jamil and Lilly Singh are great examples of role models to look up to in regard to social justice issues that pertain to race and gender identity.

If you are a gender queer person of color, I encourage you to speak up if you feel safe, are ready and want to. If you are not—and especially if you are white—do not speak over their voices. Colonization enacted severe pain and crisis upon gender queer South Asians, and it is important that we all uncover the truth behind what whitewashed history tells us.

Giving the power back to the Hijras requires more than just words. Do not sideline or ostracize individuals who are sacred and a part of South Asian cultures. It is time to take action. Support your Black and brown gender non-conforming, non-binary and gender queer siblings. Stand with them in solidarity, and respect their voices.

你能读懂我吗?: THE KEY TO CONNECTION IS LANGUAGE



Ashley Keller

She/Her

Sophomore
Nursing

Ever since the United States of America was founded, we have believed that we are the best country in the world and English is the best language in the world. This sentiment was shown early on when Americans brought enslaved people to the U.S. and made them change their African names and learn English—ridding them of their culture. Now, as immigrants from all over the world arrive here, the seemingly unsaid expectation of them is to speak and understand English perfectly.

This foolish entitlement stems from the theory of American exceptionalism. If Americans are all about freedom and justice for all, then why do we seem to exclude languages other than English?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about one in five people speak a language other than English at home. Although this phenomenon is commonplace, it is not uncommon for bilingual people to be judged and stereotyped for having an accent or not speaking English perfectly. Americans make many assumptions about the social class, intelligence and intentions of those who speak English as a second language. Largely due to stereotypes perpetuated in the media, monolingual Americans are conditioned to think in this way about bilingual people.

According to Anabel Gonzalez, an English as a Second Language (ESL) educator, a common stereotype is that all people who have English as a second language are poor or uneducated. This is not true because there are so many people from different countries that speak different languages in America with varying social classes. Many people also think that all ESL speakers are immigrants, undocumented or not “natural” citizens of the U.S. This is also not true, because many citizens learn another language as their first language if they grew up with the language at home. The stereotype that all ESL speakers are immigrants because of poverty and the need for refuge in America is offensive because many times, immigrants come to America

because of a job relocation or promotion, meaning they are educated and economically well-off already.

One of the most common and harmful assumptions about bilingual people is that they are not as intelligent as someone who speaks English fluently, according to Gonzalez. Although it may take time to improve proficiency in English, their intelligence is simply not diminished because they speak another language. In fact, learning an entirely new language is very academically challenging; criticism of ESL speakers is ironic because most monolingual English speakers are not fluent in another language, do not even try to learn a language at all or speak English imperfectly themselves.

Although there are varying reasons different ethnic groups are discriminated against based on their language, the cause is just the same. For example, many Latinos are discriminated against for not knowing English perfectly, and a lot of the discrimination comes from racist stereotypes Americans have against Latinos. Recently these stereotypes have been brought back to the spotlight during Donald Trump’s presidency, in order to defend his building of the wall to block people from coming over from Mexico. These racist sentiments have been displayed in the news very frequently, according to NBC News contributor Amanda Machado, with coverage of Latinos being kicked out of public places, threatened to have immigration and customs enforcement called on them or physically hurt for speaking Spanish in public. This is disappointing, for a country which was founded by immigrants. We, as the American people, should be utterly ashamed that those living in our country receive this kind of foul treatment for just existing here.

Additionally, American tragedies have caused racist sentiments against those who speak other languages in the United States, specifically Middle Eastern and Asian populations in America. Since 9/11, Middle Eastern citizens of the U.S. have been unfairly discriminated against and characterized as terrorists, simply for saying something in Arabic. If there was more knowledge in America about how terrorist groups form and their origins, there would not be so much speculation that every Middle Eastern person in America is a threat. It is truly sad how these people have felt forced to hide their culture, customs, religion and language

in the country they live in, just to avoid getting punished or hurt.

A quote from The Guardian writer Sinan Antoon displays this fear in reality: “On 6 April, Khairuldeen Makhzoomi... was removed, interrogated and searched by the FBI... he was forced to find another flight. Why? Because another passenger heard him speak Arabic. ‘Inshallah,’ which means ‘God willing,’ an expression used by all native speakers of Arabic irrespective of religious affiliation.” The Constitutional right to religious expression seems to waver on the basis of language.

Recently Asian Americans have been discriminated against due to the fact that the first COVID-19 cases started in Wuhan, China. Though Chinese and Chinese American people are not to blame for this virus, they have been facing punishment and persecution for, according to The New York Times, just being Asian or speaking in Mandarin, Cantonese or other dialects in the United States. These examples prove that we need to do better as a country to respect other cultures and languages, and educate ourselves before coming to conclusions.

The prevalence of foreign languages and ethnic diversity is rapidly growing in the United States, so how do we as Americans let go of our bias and privilege as native English speakers? First, we should try to learn another language. It is taught frequently in elementary, middle and high schools, but there are many problems with foreign language programs. For example, according to Catherine Snow, professor of education at Harvard University, a recent report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences “calls for more attention to language teaching in the U.S. The report notes that U.S. students have much less access to foreign language instruction than students in other economically developed countries, and that Americans are thus much less likely to be bi- or multilingual.” This is a huge problem in America because if more Americans knew more than just English, we would be more connected to others and respectful of one another.

Language programs in schools need native speakers that are teaching these classes. A majority of current teachers are not native speakers of the language they are teaching, according to El Pais writer Pilar Álvarez, and personally I do not think it is right to be teaching another

language if you do not understand and portray its cultural aspect. I have been taking Spanish classes since I was in middle school, and the first Hispanic teacher that I have ever had was in my second year of college. Children should not have to miss the opportunity of having an authentic language learning experience, wherein a native speaker controls the narrative. Personally, I feel that if students learned more about the culture and customs around each language, they would be more passionate about learning the language and continuing their studies.

There are many reasons to learn another language. First, you are able to connect and communicate with so many more people in the world, which is a crucial part of the human experience. Next, it is a challenge for your brain to learn another language, and it is proven that your cognitive skills improve from doing so, according to the Lead With Languages campaign.

Additionally, you will be a delightful and respectful traveler. Many Americans travel to foreign countries expecting that the people there will understand English. This is a very ignorant thing to do because it perpetuates the notion that people should adhere to our customs and language, even in their own country. This happens often enough that when college students study abroad, they go to a country for a whole semester and can get away with not learning a single word of the language spoken in that country. That is truly disrespectful and ignorant, which is why learning at least a little bit of a language before you go is so important.

Finally, and most importantly, learning a second language gives you perspective. While learning the language and struggling, you can imagine how hard it would be to be in a circumstance where it is vital to learn a second language quickly in order to integrate into another culture. I feel that if more Americans learn another language there will be a better respect and understanding of what so many people have had to go through, and we will appreciate our privilege and freedoms that we have as Americans. This is our time to break down barriers and build bridges between languages and cultures.

Where Are They Now?: Refugee Children in the "See Something, Say Something" Era



Beatrice Beirne

She/Her

Senior

Political Science & American
Studies

A favorite pastime of exploitative tabloids is gawking at the fate of former child stars. From balloon boy to sitcom staples, aisles are bogged down with reminders that the titular character of "Matilda" actually grew up and pays bills now.

Watching children age on the public stage has become somewhat of a national pastime, but there is a particular group that does not get the same treatment. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2019, over 33 million of the world's refugees are children. Making up approximately one-third of the world's minors that live outside their nation of birth, refugees under 18 face sickening patterns and predictable bureaucratic apathy, despite their unique personal lives and differing cultural experiences.

Since 9/11, Brown University counts between 37 and 59 million people who have been displaced from their homes. More than 40% of them are children and, according to UNICEF, approximately 200,000 unaccompanied children applied for asylum in 80 countries in 2016. Survivors of invasion, climate change, war, violence, drone strikes and ethnic cleansing, minors displaced during the post-9/11 era have become the primary victims of the War on Terror.

It did not start like this. Signed into law a little over a month after 9/11, the PATRIOT Act was a bipartisan effort to enable government monitoring of personal interests, by allowing bureaucratic agencies to observe and document the private communication of citizens and suspected terrorists alike, according to the History Channel. Enacting such a law began the U.S.'s culture-encompassing War on Terror, and the subsequent "see something, say something" era was pitched as a community-driven approach to public policing—where everyone who wasn't a terrorist was on the side of justice.

Xenophobic media rhetoric and radical political figures—alongside the increased surveillance—led to domestic neglect and foreign destitution. Refugee children, who are growing into their shoes as nations grow their arsenals, have unquestionably become targets in the "see something, say something" era.

When understanding the particular challenges that refugee children in this era face, we can examine three geopolitical groups that, according to the United Nations (UN) Refugee Agency, produce the most refugees: Syrian and Yemeni populations, migrants at the U.S. southern border and Uighur Muslim and the Rohingya in East Asia.

Once geopolitically displaced, a refugee child faces a whirlwind of dangers. According to the World Health Organization, the mortality rate of a refugee child is much higher than their non-refugee counterparts, and the most common causes of death include malnutrition, measles, diarrhoeal diseases, respiratory infections and malaria. These children are significantly

more likely to be impoverished and are 62% less likely to attend school as an adolescent, according to the UN Refugee Agency.

Refugee children are also among the most susceptible populations to trafficking, with such a large portion travelling alone. A study by the UN International Organisation for Migration found that 70% of surveyed displaced persons had been sex and organ trafficked.

This is hardly a surprise; poverty promises exploitation when stateless populations have no state to regulate their treatment. This bodes true for labor trafficking where, according to CBS News, refugee children are routinely economically arrested in unhealthy conditions—for exploitative—or no—wages. But statistics have limits; when trafficking and displacement occur simultaneously, babies are born and die undocumented, unsurveyed and without their stories told.

These children are a vulnerable type of vulnerable; the combination of two incredibly innocent identities. The specific ailments of a refugee child are distinguished by their growth during a cultural crisis; they face what their elders might—homelands destroyed from war or natural disaster, imprisonment and internment from imperialist forces, genocide and cultural annihilation, and the deprivation of necessary resources—but during a developmentally significant age. Childhood is delicate, thus destructible.

For instance, Syrian and Yemeni refugees are currently the targets of food limitations, with the latter implemented by American-supported Saudi Arabian blockades. When malnutrition is normalized for a child, according to UNICEF, they face growth stunting, impaired cognitive ability and poorer intellectual performance. Minors detained at the border are facing life-altering separation anxiety that ruptures their relationships with their faultless asylum-seeking parents, as documented by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (NSCDC). Uighur children, who have been imprisoned by the Chinese government at an alarming rate, are being indoctrinated with anti-Muslim agendas when they are school children. According to the Human Rights Watch and The New York Times, Uighur children are not allowed to be named anything "too Islamic," are barred from participating in religious activities and separated from their families or put in state orphanages. Rohingya minors' lives—and their parents' lives—have been controlled by constant fleeing from persecution since the mid 1900s, according to Vox. These tactics of starvation, separation and severe reeducation allow the erasure of cultures through traumatizing the newest generation.

Adverse childhood experiences, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are traumatizing events that occur before a person turns 18. These can disrupt the brain function of refugee children and hinder their physical and mental health. Social-emotional learning, diet and exercise all become distinctly more challenging and less attainable for them. This is not at all to say that refugee children are subordinate or incapable, rather that they are being put in situations that guarantee poorer health, financial and social-emotional outcomes.

But the psychological damage does not end when a refugee child finds geographic stability; adverse childhood traumas can persist or incapable, rather that they are being put in situations that guarantee poorer health, financial and social-

emotional outcomes.

But the psychological damage does not end when a refugee child finds geographic stability; adverse childhood traumas can persist throughout the child's life, according to the CDC. The purposes of childhood—artistic expression, friendships, exploration of one's gender identity—are tabled when survival is the primary purpose. Developmental opportunities, like learning in classrooms, and career steps, including apprentice and internships, are not attainable; religious ceremonies, first dates and movie screenings are all delayed, forgotten or never experienced. Object permanence, family gatherings, routines and regularity are eclipsed by endangerment.

There are particular aggravants that uniquely challenge each geopolitical subgroup of refugee minors. Syrian and Yemeni children, for instance, are targeted by immigrant restrictions birthed by the PATRIOT Act, and face an unfair shot at refuge and asylum according to the Human Rights Watch. For Muslim children, this has been compounded by Christian favoritism in nations who limit their immigrant intake to Mideast Christians. According to CNN, the Trump administration declared in 2017 that the U.S. would prioritize Syrian Christians—an unmistakable Islamophobic signal.

This sentiment stems from stereotypes that flourished after 9/11. Xenophobic attacks rose after the enactment of the PATRIOT Act, with over 800 cases investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice alone. Muslim and Mideast children who were born in 2001 not only recently turned 18; their entire life has been subject to the increasing anti-immigrant, -Muslim and -Mideast notions brought out of the "see something, say something" era. Between the codified racism of the PATRIOT Act and the race-based violence it encouraged, refugee children of the Mideast have been targeted based on their racial, religious and ethnic identities.

The denial of compassion is similar in our nation's Southwest. Due to the advent of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the expansion of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) after 9/11, anti-Latin American sentiments have also risen, through stereotypes, hate crimes and inaccurate political rhetoric. During this time, the U.S.-Mexico border has seen an uptick in people asking for entry, with 100,000 unaccompanied children stopped at the border in 2016.

Incarcerated on a mission of survival, these children face horrific conditions, including a lack of food, soap, space and supervision; forced hysterectomies; separations from their parents; sexual assault and abuse; over-crowding and countless other atrocities, according to the New York Times and the BBC. The NSCDC has confirmed that these conditions can release high levels of cortisol that permanently affect the architecture of children's brains. It has been largely argued, but not undeniably proved, that these conditions were an intentional action by the U.S. government to deter future border crossings.

In some cases, asylum-seeking children are put on the bench to represent themselves. The Washington Post documented that Jack H. Weil, former assistant chief immigration judge, claimed that he had "taught immigration law literally to 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds," and that "it takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of patience. They get it. It's not the most efficient, but it can be done." Toddlers are simultaneously being treated as terrorists and lawyers.

But the PATRIOT Act has not just shepherded American agendas. The technological tracking, facial recognition and secret surveillance developed by the U.S. government in the post 9/11-era has been incredibly helpful to the Chinese government's monitoring of Uighur populations. Rohingya children, part of a stateless Muslim ethnicity, have been subjected to the rise in

Islamophobia during the "see something, say something" era. Already victimized by decades of Buddhist extremism, Rohingya children additionally face American-influenced Islamophobia.

All of these—resettlement refusal, border camp conditions, ethnic bias and dystopian surveillance—are symptoms of a militaristic "see something, say something" self defense. These are children whose homelands have been destroyed by the search for weapons of mass destruction (read: oil) and whose parents have been shot down by drones. They have seen their South American suburbs mutilated by coups and met with neglect and imprisonment at the internment camps at the border. While, according to the Migration Policy Institute in 2019, the U.S. has historically accepted more refugees in the world than any other country, our nation has also created them under the guise of national security.

You might be saying, "Yes certainly the U.S. is not perfect—but it's a sticky situation." That is like telling your daycare provider that it is okay if he starves, kills and traumatizes kids, but only one-third of them.

This is a humanitarian crisis that threatens to wipe out the most marginalized members of an entire generation. There needs to be adequate effort, there needs to be empathy, there needs to be a better solution than aluminum blankets behind steel bars.

We need urgency. The protection of children is incumbent on all nations and, especially, the nation that constructs the harm they face. We can educate ourselves by not only consuming the news but doing it appropriately and with the intention to comprehend. You can simultaneously interrupt right wing media's normalization of hate crimes against refugees, migrants, immigrants and asylees. Awareness is the baby step needed to protect babies.

You can promote life-saving technology for refugees and fund sustenance resources. The challenges of refugee children in the "see something, say something" era are particular and different from any other time in history; there are technologies, such as Instant Intel, Finding Family and Identity Protection, that allow navigation and reconnection for refugees.

You can do more. You can stop pretending that taking a picture with a child displaced by a natural disaster does anything besides feed your ego and savior complex. You can canvas for candidates that commit to ending child incarceration at the border, and do not just use it as a photo opportunity. You can fight the exploitation of child laborers by not patronizing H&M, Gap, Nestle, Hershey's, Microsoft and Apple and using safe alternatives. See the pattern here? You have to be more than a presence on social media.

You can vote and campaign against anti-refugee politicians and policies. Abolishing ICE, increasing refugee intake caps, funding DACA, addressing asylees and regulating CBP are good ways to reverse insufficient PATRIOT Act-era solutions. You can oppose borders, whether literal or symbolic, that tell a child to figure out their problems by themselves. To a child, a fence is a wall: it means you are not wanted, not invited and not safe.

We have been far too comfortable being spectators on the side of the culprit. If I say to you, "Remember that viral picture of a dead refugee child that washed up on the shore," you'd have to ask "which one?" And that is kind of the point. Some work is not enough work when children are on the line.

A House Divided



Gabrielle Chiodo

She/Her

First-Year

Political Science and
Communications

The Founding Fathers were relatively certain that a Democratic Republic would protect America from the viciousness of partisan conflict. In Federalist No. 10, James Madison wrote, “Among the numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of factions.” The U.S. was safeguarded from intense bipolarization by the strength of the Constitution, or so the Founding Fathers thought.

Yet, when George Washington decided to leave the presidency in 1796, he saw the reality of America: an easily divided nation with fighting factions. In his farewell address, Washington urged Americans to seek to overcome their party differences in the future and focus on the one unifying identity all citizens share: being American. His farewell address eerily foreshadows the modern U.S. political sphere, as many characterize it as the most divided time in history since before the Civil War.

There are many factors to be accounted for when studying the current division. However, many social scientists and political activists believe the lack of diversity in political parties is to blame. Many wonder if the United States would be more harmonious if something other than the two-party system existed. Ideally, a mix of several different parties would allow people to find a party that more closely fits with their personal ideals. The increase in party diversity could also decrease polarization, as certain parties could share common ground rather than being diametrically opposed.

America has nearly always existed in a two-party system, but many social scientists, such as Lee Drutman, a senior fellow at the Political Reform Program of New America, believe that the system is no longer serving its purpose. The two-party system was once said to produce moderation through convergence of the median. Essentially, candidates must make an appeal to both sides if they wish to win elections. What we see in America today is whichever party has the larger voter turnout—or more effective voter suppression—seems to win. According to the Pew Research Center, in the 2020 Congressional elections, there was less split-ticket voting than ever before. This indicates that the median is disappearing and voters are

becoming increasingly partisan.

Steve Rogers, associate professor of political science at Saint Louis University, believes this partisanship can be attributed to a process called “voter sorting.” Due to the visibility of political elites and the abundance of headline news, it is much easier to identify what it means to be a Democrat or Republican than it has been in the past. Additionally, Rogers believes that the polarization is not one of citizens becoming more liberal or conservative; rather, American voters are just feeling more anger, hatred and opposition toward those whose political beliefs do not align with their own.

American citizens are not the only source of polarization. Rogers hinted that there is also more contention among governmental elites than in the past. To prove this point, he noted that between 2000-2010 there was a significant increase in the use of filibusters. As defined by the U.S. Senate, a filibuster is “any attempt to block or delay Senate action on a bill or other matter by debating it at length, by offering numerous procedural motions or by any other delaying or obstructive actions.” The rise in filibuster usage indicates a decrease in bipartisan dialogue and an increase in conflict.

With polarization existing within the U.S. populus and government, many are wondering what can be done to ease tensions. As previously mentioned, some believe that the installation of a multi-party system would benefit the nation greatly. Drutman is one of these believers. In an interview with the Niskanen Center, a nonpartisan think tank that works to promote an open society, Drutman states, “The answer’s that we change the way we vote, allow for more parties, become a multi-party democracy and break the the zero sum hyper partisanship that is a fundamental threat to our democracy in this moment.” Drutman is not alone.

“In any other country, Joe Biden and I would not be in the same party, but in America, we are,” stated Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY). A variety of options for the voter would allow more sentiments to be truly reflected. There is no doubt that a multi-party system would increase voter motivation, as individuals would feel their votes actually mattered. But would a multi-party

system would increase voter motivation, as individuals would feel their votes actually mattered. But would a multi-party system completely correct a polarized America? According to Rogers, the answer is no. He believes that while the two party system creates a vehicle for polarization, it is the American political culture and opposition to those with opposing views that creates a stark divide. This opposition would not end with the implementation of more parties.

Additionally, evidence suggests that the rise of the third party is not only difficult, but unlikely. Analysis of presidential election statistics supports this theory. Since 1788, there have been 59 presidential elections. But, according to research historian Aaron O’Neill, third party or independent candidates have only been able to garner actual Electoral College in five elections since 1892.

Since 1877, there have been 119 third party U.S. Representatives according to the U.S. House of Representatives Archives. Since 1789, however, there have been 10,421 individuals to serve as Representatives in Congress alone. This indicates that American politics do not create a conducive environment for the rise of more than two opposing parties.

The only true remedy for the current political polarization in the U.S. is actively working to engage in bipartisan dialogue and legislation. The Bridge Alliance, a coalition of nearly 100 organizations, works to nurture consistent and open communication between members of all parties. If citizens and elected officials would like to save democracy from the dangers of a two party system, they must stop isolating themselves from members of the opposite party. Too often, Americans dismiss one another because of their Republican or Democratic label. How can common ground ever be found if we refuse to engage in dialogue?

The implementation of a multi-party system would add great benefits to the U.S. as a whole. However, many social scientists, including Rogers, believe this is nothing more than a far-fetched dream. Until the nation shifts to a point where multiple parties can successfully run for office, there are concrete steps each American individual can take to help save democracy. Have the tough conversations; do not just walk away. Be okay with being uncomfortable. Change is not easy. Build bridges with those you typically would shy away from. Everyone can do their part to decrease political rage and increase democratic harmony.

FROM APPLICATION TO ADVANCEMENT:

Workplace Barriers for Differently-Abled People



Julian Makhoul

He/Him
Senior
Biology

In the great variety of workplace settings, there are a number of different qualities that employers expect in candidates. Sometimes, these qualities are relevant to the job, but there are a number of instances where the qualities sought after seem to go far beyond what is typically performed. This kind of workforce gatekeeping is most harmful for people who might have a physical, sensory or social disability that prevents them from meeting a boilerplate set of demands.

Job applications include phrases like “ability to lift twenty-five pounds” or communicate “normally,” and these are often used to the detriment of people who cannot perform all the same functions that conventionally able-bodied people can. When people are abled differently in any small way, they face barriers in the workplace that their abled counterparts do not—during the hiring process, while on the job and with career advancement.

People who are differently-abled experience difficulty in finding employment. As mentioned previously, one of the greatest problems in job descriptions is that they require abilities that are not essential for the job. According to an article from Pacific Standard, if you go to HigherEdJobs.com, a web tool to find careers in academia, and “search for ‘25 pounds,’ you’ll find 654 entries right now that require various degrees of physical ability, often accompanied by other statements mandating ‘normal’ modes of communication.”

The result of this is that a lot of differently-abled people who are perfectly qualified for the job end up being passed over due to excluding ability requirements. Another obstacle to employment are the physical barriers which may discourage a differently-abled person from applying to a particular job. Some examples of these include the lack of an elevator or wheelchair ramp, or not providing modified

equipment which would allow any person to perform in the position.

RISE Services, Inc., a human service network for differently-abled people, states that “if a person has severe dyslexia or visual impairments, they need to be provided with a computer that is capable of reading the screen to them.” In many workplaces, these accommodations can be difficult to ask for, let alone be obtained, and thus serve as an additional barrier to employment.

Differently-abled people are also faced with attitudes and stereotyping, teasing and being patronized once they do get hired, which makes it more difficult to keep a job. Many people have judgments and assumptions about differently-abled persons, which prevent the latter from having a positive experience.

For example, a person might be denied resources if the employer does not believe they have autism, a learning disability or other “invisible” disabilities—ones which are not immediately apparent physically, such as being in a wheelchair. Even though this is illegal because of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, discrimination like this occurs all the time. This is especially the case with “invisible” disabilities, which are questioned more frequently than visible ones.

Additionally, differently-abled people are often on the receiving end of a great deal of teasing after they get hired. Narayan Seva Sansthan, a polio rehabilitation clinic, states that people who participate in teasing often “find superiority in bullying the weak and underprivileged.” When a differently-abled person encounters a lot of teasing in the workplace, the quality of their work might suffer, which could result in disciplinary action, or they might feel as though they need to switch to a less demanding, lower paying job to avoid the disrespect.

Lastly, differently-abled people deal with patronization in the workplace that may not be readily apparent for those who believe they are helping. To some differently-abled people, hearing things like “I know what you are going through” or “I know this must be hard” are not beneficial. These would simply not do justice when considering the great amount of trouble that differently-



abled people, hearing things like “I know what you are going through” or “I know this must be hard” are not beneficial. These would simply not do justice when considering the great amount of trouble that differently-abled people go through every day. While this might not seem like a big deal to a conventionally abled person, such phrases can be a form of outcasting if repeated enough times in a condescending manner.

Additionally, differently-abled people experience difficulty when it comes to career advancement. A 2017 article titled “Exploring career advancement challenges people with disabilities are facing in the South African work context” details the career advancement challenges that can be found in people with disabilities. The authors found that differently-abled people generally experience challenges in career advancement and reach career plateaus. More specifically, the study found that “human resource practices, *especially promotion opportunities*, discriminate against employees with disabilities.” It also found that “there is prejudice against invisible disabilities, and as a result, employees are reluctant to declare their disability.”

From this, it can be concluded that there is still a long way to go before differently-abled people are given the opportunities that they deserve. Because this study also found that managers and colleagues who lack knowledge about their disability had an adverse impact on their careers, it is essential that human resource practitioners and managers begin to recognize the influence that they have on the career advancement of individuals who are living with a disability.

In order to overcome these barriers, it is important to embolden people who are differently-abled. Specifically, it is essential to destigmatize and normalize asking for and getting accommodations or assistance. On Labor, a blog devoted to workers rights, states that people “might be uncertain whether they really want to claim the ‘disabled’ label due [to] a complicated cocktail of emotions, including internalized stigma, fear of a negative reaction, guilt that they are ‘less disabled’ than others, and reluctance to do the emotional labor of advocating for oneself.”



Many employees are hesitant to claim their ADA right because of the pitfalls of mandated disclosure. Therefore, it is essential that managers and coworkers promote a non-judgmental atmosphere in the workplace. Another possible solution is to affirmatively invite employees via a regularly distributed questionnaire or email, to request or discuss reasonable accommodations.

Another way to combat ableism in the workplace is to become anti-ableist. This does not only mean avoiding offensive actions and speech, but also a shift in the thinking of conventionally abled to make essential changes in their lives and the lives of others. There are a number of proactive things one can do to accomplish this. One easy but necessary way people can begin this process is to learn to stop staring at folks. If this happens by mistake, they should then apologize and stop staring. Simple things—like apologies and acknowledgements—can go a long way. Second, it is important to avoid racing to help someone with a disability. While well-intentioned, this can create obstacles for folks. Instead, it is better to respectfully embolden differently-abled people so that they feel secure to make a request for themselves.

Lastly, it is important to stop debating whether someone is less abled. No one should have to defend their disability. “Differently-abled” does not mean unable.

As society progresses in the 21st century, it is essential that the barriers that differently-abled people face in the hiring process are recognized and these people feel supported, respected and able to advance in their careers. Once this occurs, it will lead to more support for folks who are often left with their voices unheard.

While differently-abled people have gotten more protection legally from the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, they still face difficulty within a culture that stigmatizes their disability. While it is difficult to legislate job environments, managers, coworkers and customers can do their part in emboldening differently-abled people and becoming anti-ableist. When this happens, workplace culture can evolve to ensure that everyone feels that they are valued and understood.



RACE, REDLINING, & RED PENS:

The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Education



Klaudia Wachnik

She/Her

Sophomore

Public Health

Many would say that the United States of America is currently in a post-racial society. While it cannot be ignored that there has been progress in developing policies, attitudes and a nation against racism, we are most definitely not in a post-racial society. While many institutions in the U.S. continue to engage in systemic racism, a primary one that overtly shows this continued engagement is the U.S. education system.

Systemic racism, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is “policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that results in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race.” It can be stated plainly: the U.S. education system fulfills this definition, thus remaining systemically racist. The current education system exhibits disparity in the quality of education between minority and white students.

To understand this, we must begin with the connection between socioeconomic status and race, as a disparity in socioeconomic status leads to a disparity in education. Socioeconomic status, as defined by the American Psychological Association, is “the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation,” and “examinations of socioeconomic status often reveal inequities in access to resources, plus issues related to privilege, power and control.”

Socioeconomic conditions greatly contribute to the quality of education, as they contribute directly to the funding the school receives through property taxes, and all of the materials and devices students can use to heighten and nurture their education.

Currently, there is a large disparity in average socioeconomic status between white and (many) minority

families. In 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor reported that the average household income and education attainment for minorities, excluding those of Asian descent, was significantly less in comparison to their white counterparts, revealing the bridge between the disparity in socioeconomic status and education. This disparity did not come to be on its own, as history has been the cause for it and contributes to it today.

Brought up by the likes of colonization, indentured servitude and slavery, America was born with a racial and ethnic hierarchy: white, European ethnicities on the top, and essentially every other race or ethnicity on the bottom. This hierarchy was displayed through blatant discrimination and codified racism, where policies, laws and attitudes were created to further enforce this. In examining socioeconomic status and how it plays into education, we see how a pattern of racist historical actions have determined exactly who is higher in socioeconomic status—and, by effect, education—and who is lower.

A fundamental contributor to this is redlining. Redlining, which was outlawed in 1969 by the Fair Housing Act, was an act where lending offices outlined areas on a map, deeming “safe” ones in green and “risky” ones in red. Typically, the areas deemed “risky” were ones where people of color lived and redlining was intentionally an act of discrimination. Overwhelmingly, Black Americans were the targets of these redlines. When an area was redlined, its members were often denied any sort of goods or services by the federal and local government and many private sectors, including mortgages, funding and housing in other areas.

Redlining has left its mark today, with many people of color living in the same congregated areas that were underfunded and provided little to no aid in comparison to the “safe” areas with primarily white people. Redlining, in its blatant sense from before 1968, played a heavy role in the education of the students that live in those areas.

Schools receive funding largely based on the property taxes of the area that it covers and, while everyone would like to have high funding for their schools, that is not always the case. Property taxes are determined by the value of property in a specific area, according to Investopedia, an

American financial website. Areas, primarily with people of color, that had previously been redlined and underfunded, have low property values and, therefore, are in an area with schools that are underfunded, contributing to a lower socioeconomic status and quality of education.

Conversely, areas with primarily white people had not been redlined previously and now have high property values. In essence, these schools are better funded due to a higher socioeconomic status and receive a greater quality of education. Students receiving more funding at their schools have greater access to resources like technology and school-based internet, as well as personal technology and reliable home internet access.

In early March of 2020, when COVID-19 began rapidly spreading in the U.S., all students who attended school away from home experienced a significant change in their usual schooling experience. Schools, by the direction of public health officials and experts, were forced to send students home and have them participate in virtual learning, also known as online or e-learning. A student doing online learning spends anywhere from five to seven hours in front of the computer, engaging with classmates and a teacher over a virtual meeting device like Zoom or Google Meet. For all students doing virtual learning, technology and internet access is a necessity.

However, for many students of lower socioeconomic status who attend schools of lower funding, this necessity is not necessarily a given. Technology, either school-funded or personally owned, is not accessible if that school or student cannot afford it, which is largely the case in areas of lower socioeconomic status. The same can be said for reliable internet access at home. In having less access to technology and the internet, these students that are typically of color receive a lower quality of education in comparison to their white peers. While there are always outliers, this pattern of deprivation is based in a history of racism.

The news journal Education Week published data on the disparities in remote learning during COVID-19, finding that “in districts with the lowest percentages of students from low-income families, just 1 in 5 [school officials] reported in late March that a lack of basic technology is a ‘major’ problem, compared with nearly two-thirds of [officials] in districts where the highest percentages of students are from low-income families.” While a disparity in education between white and minority students existed before COVID-19, it has certainly been exemplified due to

a socioeconomic difference in access to reliable education resources, such as technology and the internet.

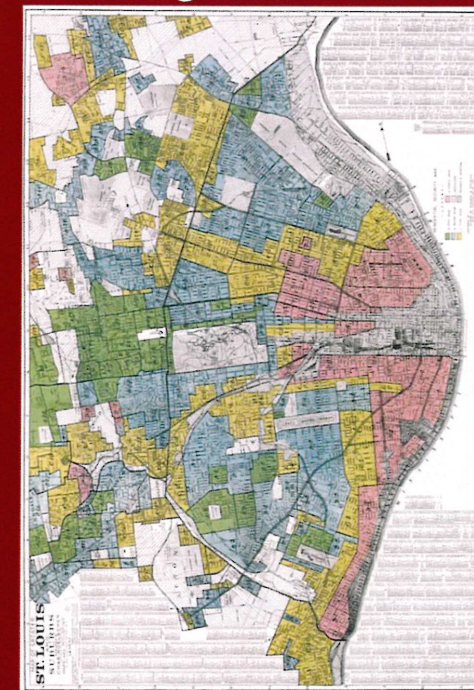
While this pandemic-driven widening of disparity is currently affecting minority students greatly, it will leave its mark on all students in the future. Minority students of lower socioeconomic status may be greatly behind their white counterparts, according to Michelle Fox of CNBC, and receive less educational attainment in their lives. This is not any fault of minority students; this is a national history of racism working against them.

Unless something is done to combat this disparity in access to technology and the internet, the long-standing effects will be detrimental to many students of color.

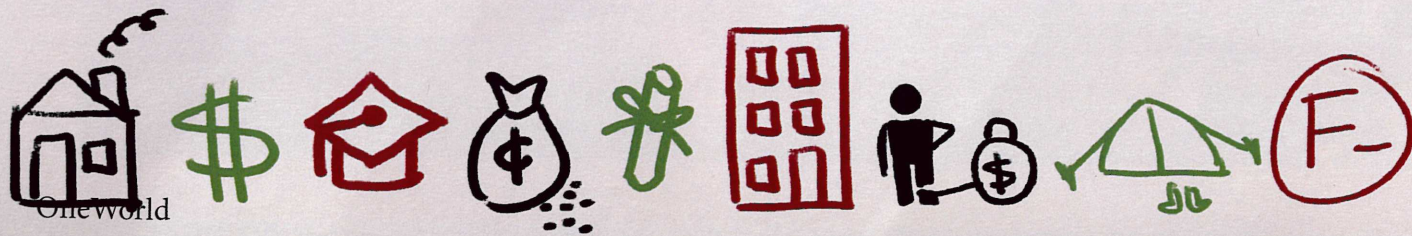
Because of how flawed the education system is, generations of students are having their fundamental years destroyed and are facing extreme developmental challenges.

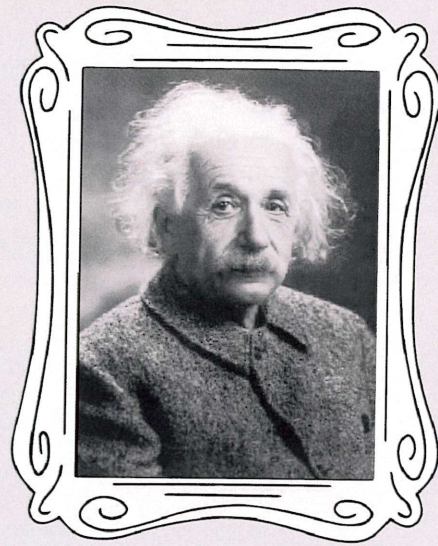
In lower socioeconomic areas, educators, parents, students and advocates all recognize and endure this problem. A student born into issues outside their control should not be deprived of chances, should not be prevented them from the quality of education promised by the American Dream. Together, we can fix this.

Redlining and Home Values



In Saint Louis (finance.yahoo.com)





INFORMATION IS EVERYTHING: RURAL EDUCATION AND CELEBRITY SCIENTISTS



Arjun Sahai

He/Him

First-Year

Neuroscience

Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Elon Musk—these scientists all relate upon one common thread. They carried the torch from their scientific ancestors and changed civilization for the better. Delving into the storied history of science, the growing opportunities in areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are increasing more and more with every new generation.

In addition, according to the Education Commission of the United States, between 2017 and 2027, the number of available jobs in STEM-related occupations will increase by 13%, in comparison to the increase in non-STEM related occupations. In addition, since the early 1990s, employment in STEM occupations has risen by 79%, according to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center. The importance of these statistics extends beyond the quantitative significance; with this newfound growth in the various STEM fields, the inaccessibility of the scientific progress by rural communities must be fixed, in order for all components of society to reap the benefits of innovation and progression.

In the context of COVID-19, the manner in which people refused state mandates of health policy should serve as a great cautionary tale surrounding the reality of science's acceptance by members of society. Despite immense scientific achievement and advancements that are happening during the COVID-19 era in the U.S., many have viewed the science of precautionary steps to be insufficient. In essence, the explanations and portrayal of STEM concepts were inaccessible to people who have not had a robust STEM education, especially those in rural communities.

In these communities, there is a need to bridge the gap between the existing disparities and accessible success; enhancing educational standards, highlighting the exponential growth of STEM career opportunities and addressing the responsibilities of the scientific community are essential to making long term

improvements in society so that scientific progress is equitable for all.

A major problem with the current educational standards surrounding rural communities is not the community itself, but rather outsiders' inaccurate perception of the quality of education in these communities. In a study conducted by Nat Malkus, the Deputy Director of Education at the American Education Institute, students from predominantly rural areas consistently outperformed students from suburban and urban areas in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading exam.

In addition, the study also demonstrated that rural communities tend to exhibit higher levels of social cohesion, higher faith in community safety and stronger beliefs in the ability of educational institutions. The importance of this study is that it corrects the narrative surrounding the perceptions of rural communities; we must fund STEM programs in these areas, as test scores indicate the intelligence and capability of rural students.

More attention must be given to underprovided educational sectors within various rural areas. According to a survey conducted by the Harvard Kennedy School, in predominant East coast states, rural districts receive 50% less funding from the federal government per student than urban counties. For STEM-related fields, which often require funding for technology and equipment, this is a staggering educational barrier that bars thousands of students from entering their fields of interest.

There is a solution to low-quality STEM education in rural areas that can also help society at large: scientists engaging in public education. Currently, the social context surrounding these fields has grown to a point where political discourse is currently being set by scientists, doctors, educators and other field experts, who initiate collaboration with the hopes of explaining contemporary phenomena to the public and generating dialogue to further societal understanding.

The significance this can play is not to promote the popularity of these figures of science; rather, it will allow people of all backgrounds to receive direct content of well-established scientific literature. According to the Pew Research Center, 79% of scientists believe it is a major problem for science that news reports do not distinguish between whether or not a scientific

finding is well-founded. A well-founded study is peer-reviewed, replicated and its findings have been confirmed by multiple sources, whereas one that is not well-founded lacks these components. By not clarifying whether or not a finding is well-founded, news organizations can have a detrimental effect toward society's understanding of science and the world around them. Without transparency, the information directed toward viewers is a disarray of conspiracies, weak truths and blatant fallacies.

It is incumbent upon the leaders in the STEM fields to put effort toward increasing the literacy of society in relation to general scientific processes and mechanisms. By not doing so, they allow uninformed people to fall prey to the predator of those who are willing to exploit them for financial and social gain. In order to shift this paradigm to a more informed society, more leaders in science occupations need to take active roles in engaging in public discussions via news outlets, journal articles and online forums in order for fact to be differentiated from fiction.

A good example of this is Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the chief medical advisor to the president, who prioritized bluntly telling the truths of COVID-19 in a vocabulary that was accessible to average Americans. The knowledge of scientific concepts and appreciation of their processes is required for personal decision making, such as wearing a mask or receiving vaccinations, and greatly influences the livelihoods of all involved. Though not everyone listened to him, Dr. Fauci was patient and productive in his explanation of the science behind COVID-19's spread and necessary precautions. There is a responsibility of the scientific communities to make the new developments and breakthroughs in science accessible to all members of society.

We need scientists to enforce public STEM education because there are already anti-STEM voices out there. To prove this, I call to the stand the anti-mask movement beginning in 2020. As COVID-19 greatly affected the livelihoods of millions of families and small businesses, this movement arose through the cracks and was a predominant topic of political discourse for quite some time. According to California-based psychiatrist Dr. Gayani DeSilva, oppositional messages in the media and from people in positions of authority, such as government officials, are the major reasons for how and why this anti-mask movement arose in the first place. Subsequently, a surge of infections proceeded, driven in part by this dereliction of safety precautions. Herein lies the real-world gap that the promotion of STEM education, particularly by "celebrity scientists", can serve to bridge.

In the promotion of STEM education and opportunity, society can and will directly reap the benefits of these advancements. It is often said that true liberty, in its raw and unfiltered form, is only safeguarded and protected through the

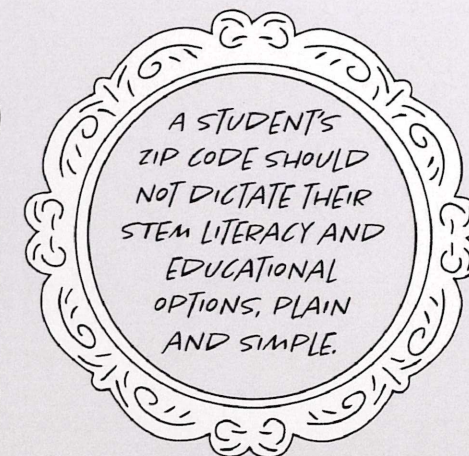
preservation and successful diffusion of fact and knowledge. Such is the case for the times we live in, where the roles of scientists are more fluid than ever. People like Neil deGrasse Tyson, Bill Nye, Stephen Hawking, Jane Goodall and Bill Gates have become household names, as well as reliable distributors of STEM information.

In fact, it was the great astrophysicist Carl Sagan who once stated, "We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology." Comedy aside, this quote unveils the field's best kept secret: we need to educate people on STEM because we need people who are educated in STEM.

The scientist has become the beacon of defense, the researcher has become the primary source of central intelligence and the nurse has become the soldier in the battlefield. Standing upon the shoulders of the men and women who dedicate their life's work towards redefining the boundary between the known and unknown, the capability and opportunities surrounding the STEM fields must be promoted in order to maximize these advancements into something tangible, concrete and effective toward the lives of the general public.

The potential of translating widespread scientific practice into a solution for millions of people represents the bastion of hope that can serve to bridge the gap between the present disparities. No longer will the page be left untouched where equitable access to information and advancement is barred. Only through equal access may we hope to cultivate a rich culture of academic excellence in which we rid the world of borders and promote connections of knowledge and community.

As a student at Saint Louis University, a research institution that represents a state-of-the-art paragon in terms of promoting academics and spirituality, I feel greatly responsible in shedding awareness toward this, as education is transformative in its ability to manifest multiple career paths for students from all socioeconomic backgrounds. A great solution to the deficit of STEM education in rural communities is for members of the scientific community to mobilize toward public education. To further catalyze this revolution of STEM, we must ensure inclusivity regardless of socioeconomic status. A student's zip code should not dictate their STEM literacy and educational options, plain and simple.



Living in a Man's World

THE “TO-DO LIST”



Tracy George

She/Her
Junior
Biology

Content Warning: Sexual Assault

“Your shorts can’t be too short.” Check. “You can’t be out too late at night.” Check. “Make sure to be respectful to a man trying to talk to you.” Check. Check. Check.

What can we as women change about ourselves to avoid being sexually assaulted? This mindset has been engraved into the heads of young girls as soon as they are able to pick out their own clothes or go anywhere unattended by their parents. Reinforced behavior regarding rape is caused by limited consequences for the perpetrator

that often lead to decreased reporting from victims. Sexual violence is not limited to one area of the world, yet there seems to be a epidemic of sexual assault against women in India.

The National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 32,033 rape cases in 2019—that translates to 88 cases a day—yet this was estimated to be just 10% of the actual rapes that occurred, according to the Times of India. The issue at hand requires understanding the central cause of India’s rape problem. At its root, women in India face a high risk of sexual assault due to deeply engrained historical and prevailing attitudes that they are inferior to men.

The prevalence of sexual violence in India is formed from generations of perpetuating the ideal that women are second class citizens who deserve to be shamed for being sexually assaulted. Those accused of rape are frequently protected from allegations by police, politicians and family members—or, as is the case frequently, the family members

are the assailants.

Unwilling sexual advancements between a wife and a husband are considered a crime in almost every country of the world; India is one of the 36 that still have not considered it a criminal offense, according to Sarthak Makkar, writer for the Harvard Human Rights Journal. In the 1860s, when the Indian Penal Code was drafted, a woman was not considered to be a separate entity from her husband. This prevented thousands of victims from speaking out about their sexual assault due to beliefs that they were not even their own person. Women have been conditioned to form merging identities with their husbands in order to limit their abilities to speak for themselves.

A power-hungry attitude from politicians and law enforcement tends to condemn women for acting a certain way or being at the wrong place, rather than educating men on respecting the women they encounter. The Case of Mathura in 1980 sparked anger and debate in relation to how much control can really be left to law enforcement officers. Mathura was 14 years old when she accused two policemen of raping and molesting her in the town of Desaiganj. According to University of Bristol research fellow Geetanjali Gangoli, no court had believed she was telling the truth and one even stated, “She is a shocking liar whose testimony is riddled with falsehood and improbabilities.

She is so habituated to sexual intercourse that she could not have been so overpowered by fear that she could not resist.”

Mathura had figuratively worn a scarlet letter on her chest as the stigma of rape in India was monumental at the time. Yet, this case was one of the first to set in motion discussions about social and legal attitudes in India that saw sexual violence for what it really was: a refusal to accept the bodily autonomy of a woman.

As detailed in the documentary “India’s Daughter,” the case surrounding Jyoti Singh confirmed the perspective that sexual assault in India is not just a crime of the past, but something that continuously places fear into women’s minds and limitations of their lives. Singh was a 23-year-old medical student entering a bus at 8:30 p.m. after watching a movie with her male friend. A group of men on the bus, including the bus driver, took turns raping Singh and left her beaten, bitten and violated. One of the guilty displayed an unaffected demeanor when recalling the events as he tried to justify what had happened to Singh: “A decent girl won’t roam around at nine at night”; “A girl is far more responsible for a rape than a boy”; “She would not have died if she hadn’t tried to fight back.”

This perspective is shared by many men in India, who believe that a woman should take what she gets since a male has the power to do as he pleases: an attitude fostered by the society he grew up in. Unjust opinions on what masculinity consists of are formed for a male at a young age, as his well-being, opportunities and future are placed ahead

of females—even if they are in the same family.

Sexual assault in India is not just a legal issue, but a social one. A crucial aspect of decreasing gender-based violence is to put forth tough laws that actively work to address the crimes of sexual assault. It is imperative that these laws are present to support equality rather than the unequal distribution of power. In addition, education must be at the forefront of this issue to ensure that all individuals are able to understand the existence of violence toward women in India. A shift in the culture needs to include withdrawing from the belief that men can do whatever they want to women, and this is a belief that is important to teach at a young age. True gender equality can only occur when women are not seen as existing solely for the pleasure of men.

Gender-based crime in India has been an issue for decades, and it continues to require serious attention. Women should not be required to place limitations on their lives in order to ensure that they are not sexually assaulted. There is no sexual-assault-prevention to-do-list. Instead, there must be a system behind them that will fight for justice and assure women that they are recognized as valued, respected and powerful in any society they exist in.

Support, not Shame:

Confronting the Conversation on Eating Disorders



Grace Vavrik

She/Her

Sophomore

Investigative and Medical
Sciences

We need to talk. No, we need to shout at the top of our lungs that this is not okay. It is time to begin a conversation about the unspoken pandemic that has plagued the world for centuries: eating disorders. Sympathized, yet abhorred. Pernicious, yet disregarded. I demand change. So, let us discuss.

One out of every 10 people are affected by eating disorders worldwide, according to the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD). To be clear, “eating disorders” (ED) is an all-encompassing term for any mental health disorder relating to negative emotions and behavior toward food, dieting and exercise. EDs are not just anorexia and bulimia. There are a range of disorders that can present themselves at any point in someone’s life. EDs are non-selective, as they affect people of all ages, genders, races and socioeconomic statuses. Their causes are as diverse as their victims; genetics, societal norms, environment and psychological health are all stimulating factors, according to writer Susan McQuillan.

The misconstrued conception that anorexia and bulimia are the only EDs emphasizes the lack of education afforded to this topic. Some EDs can fit into certain groups, while others are rather unique. For example, Breathe Life Healing Center and the Foundation for Research and Education in Eating Disorders (FREED) identify EDs that deal with self-inflicted food restriction as anorexia nervosa, diabulimia, selective eating disorder and avoidant or restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID). EDs that deal with purging of food include bulimia nervosa and rumination disorder. Muscle dysmorphia and body dysmorphic disorder are EDs that relate to an obsession over one’s body and appearance; EDs characterized by weight gain via extreme overeating are binge eating disorder and compulsive overeating (COE). These are just a select few from a large list comprising the many possible diagnoses.

Where can we start to fix this complex and misunderstood issue? Education. Cultivating a safe space for people from all walks of life to learn and have conversations about EDs is crucial if we are to destigmatize them.

Founded by Patti Geolat, Something for Kelly (SFK)

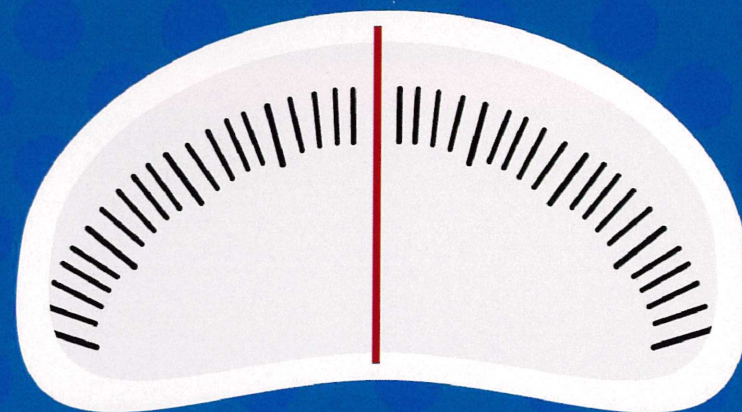
is an organization centered in educating people, particularly adolescents, on EDs. SFK travels across the country to middle and high schools, giving interactive seminars to students. This gives them the appropriate tools to start conversations about EDs. Ignorance is not bliss; many struggle with EDs and do not even know it because they were never introduced to them.

SFK hosts a radio program once a week discussing any and all aspects of EDs, like risk factors, current research advances and survivor’s stories. This is a continuation of the conversation. As essential as these conversations are, they need to include more people, especially young ones.

As mentioned, EDs are non-selective, affecting people of all genders, races and ages. However, adolescents are frequently the focal group of those affected. This group is also the target of many media outlets. Television shows, social media posts, podcasts and movies are very focused on reaching this age group. Whether or not the media depicts EDs in a way that is beneficial to this cause is the question at hand.

Numerous movies and TV shows simply do not acknowledge the fact that EDs exist nor their prevalence amongst the adolescents portrayed on screen. This affects how young viewers approach the idea of EDs, particularly when they have self-image issues, internal doubts and cravings to be validated by their favorite shows and movies. If they do not see that EDs are a problem for their favorite characters, they may feel isolated and invalid.

On the flip side, there are a few movies showing a very dramatized aspect of EDs, such as “To the Bone.” These films have caused much controversy among parents and older generations, as they do not see this issue as “appropriate” for their children. Understandably, the explicit details may not be the way to introduce adolescents to EDs, and some shows undermine the gravity of this disorder by romanticizing it; however, children shouldn’t be shielded from this discussion either. The



overdramatization can cause young viewers to downplay their symptoms of EDs, allowing them to think they are not experiencing feelings nearly as severe as the characters on film. This may cause them to dismiss their feelings, which will progress their disorder to a possibly irrevocable stage marring their mental and physical health.

Not only that, but young males are rarely seen in the media depicting struggles with EDs. Males experience negative self-esteem issues just as much as anyone else. This can cause many boys to feel as though they are not allowed to have an ED—according to societal standards—and ignore any possible signs that they may have one, for fear of being labeled as “weak.”

A major medium on which EDs are dealt with is social media; accounts and pages provide an entirely new source of communication with younger generations. Editing apps and photo angles are only two of the many ways that people are able to adjust their photos to depict their body in the “most” acceptable way. This can lead to an abundance of developing adolescents feeling unworthy in comparison to the edited posts on their feed—simply because their body doesn’t match up to an unrealistic standard.

Fortunately, there are a couple social media pages that address the issue of EDs, particularly toward the group of individuals targeted by misrepresentative media posts. Accounts like @murraynutrition and @myselflovesupply on Instagram provide comfort to their followers struggling with EDs. They start conversations. This is hugely impactful on the minds of younger generations, as the media is coveted by them. Providing validation relieves some

of the stress and pain adolescents feel daily if they struggle in understanding what they are experiencing. Positive reinforcements like these, that promote body positivity and self love to adolescents, can persuade them to seek the help they need sooner rather than later.

What more can we do? Trust in science. Much research has already been done, but there is still so much more we don’t know. Not only does SFK partake in combating this pandemic via education and discussion, but also through science. SFK has contributed a great deal to the research and discovery of genetic predispositions for EDs. Partnered with the Eating Disorders Genetics Initiative (EDGI), SFK aims to bridge the gap between science and solution—and the results that they have unearthed already are promising. EDGI scientists discovered some people can be predisposed to acquiring an ED just based on their genetic buildup. This is just the beginning, as EDGI is studying other genetic connections, such as those between depression and anxiety.

Change will not happen unless we take accountability. It is our responsibility to raise our younger generations in a world where their experiences and feelings are legitimized. Share your opinion. Share your story. Participate in research efforts. Start the conversation. Have hope.

No more ignoring EDs because the topic is uncomfortable. No more condemning those facing the distressing effects of EDs. No more excuses. Educate yourself. Educate your children. Educate your friends. This conversation has just begun and, my word, we have a lot more that needs to be said.



Kruti Kadiwala
She/Her
Junior
Health Management and
Public Health

A shiny, yellow taxi was a symbol of a bridge to the American Dream for many immigrants who became taxi drivers in New York City during the late 1980s through the early 2000s. But for thousands of these same drivers, their taxi cabs have led them on a never ending journey to an American Nightmare: debt.

In order to operate a licensed yellow taxi in New York, one must have a medallion, which is basically a piece of metal on the hood of a cab. This system was developed in 1937 in an effort to cap the number of taxis in the city. Initially, this new regulation did not have much effect on the number of taxis that were being operated, but it soon became a large market to generate wealth.

As immigrants arrived in New York, they were drawn to cab driving because it was work that could be done independently and the demand for it was high. According to an article published in the *Journal of Community Health*, 91% of cab drivers in New York are immigrants and 95% are male. Further, another study published in the same journal displayed that by the early 2000s, 38% of drivers were South Asian (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi), followed by 23% from the West Indies and 14% from Africa.

But it is important to distinguish why some immigrants became taxi drivers and others were able to attain higher paying jobs, especially among South Asian immigrants. According to an article published in the *Labor History Journal*, South Asian immigrants that moved to the U.S. in the late 1950s and 60s were largely from upper class, highly-educated backgrounds. The immigrants that arrived in the states in the 80s and 90s, however, were typically from lower, working class backgrounds. Additionally, even if some of these immigrants had educational degrees from their home countries, these accomplishments were not always recognized in the U.S., making it harder to prove they were qualified for higher positions.

Similarly, connections drove the employment opportunities for South Asian immigrants. Many lacked the social capital to enter social networks that provided higher paying jobs. For these immigrants, taxi driving was a way they could build income in the states, support their families in the U.S. and send money to relatives in their home countries. But as these immigrants dreamed of building wealth in this country, they were met with many barriers.

Bearing large obstacles, taxi drivers have come together as mostly ethnic minorities to better their labor conditions and workers' rights. These immigrant social networks have been able to mobilize through strikes and demonstrations to improve their experiences. In 2010, they worked to pass a bill which guaranteed drivers with medallions at least a minimum wage and provided workers' compensation for drivers.

A case study published in the *International Migration Journal* documents hundreds of drivers and revealed how committed taxi drivers are to helping each other, because of their shared occupation and immigrant background. The article summarizes a statement by a taxi driver, Ravinder Singh, stating that "implicit in [his] words are hidden expectations of friendship and reciprocity" from fellow immigrant co-workers. Even though they were able to build community through their shared occupation, immigrant taxi drivers are still constantly strained by the plight of American capitalism.

As stated previously, in order to drive a licensed taxi in New York, drivers need to purchase a medallion. According to an article published in the *Data Mining Journal*, the average price of a medallion was over \$100,000 in 1987 and, by the late 90s, they were worth over \$200,000. These purchases were largely financed by banks and financial institutions, and in 1995, Medallion Financial was founded as a firm specialized in "originating, acquiring and servicing loans that finance taxicab medallions and various types of commercial businesses." Within a year, it actively traded on the stock exchange. At that point, the annual return for medallions was between 3% and 9%, which was better than an investment in gold or oil. This wealth was—and is—largely accumulated by lenders, as 80% of taxis in New York are owned by investors but operated by drivers using leased medallions.

In the late 90s and early 2000s, as taxi drivers took out leases for or loans to buy out leases for or loans to buy medallions, banks and firms like Medallion Financial profited off predatory lending practices. A *New York Times* investigation revealed that hundreds of taxi drivers were trapped in exploitive loans where drivers had to forfeit legal rights or signed interest-only loans that tricked them into paying extensive fees. The investigation found that a Bangladeshi immigrant said he "was told to lie about his income on his loan application; he eventually lost his medallion. A Haitian immigrant who worked to exhaustion to make his monthly payments discovered he had been paying only interest and went bankrupt."

In the early 2000s, lenders told prospective immigrant drivers that medallion values would always rise. Lenders focused on lower-income drivers because, even though it was riskier, they were easier to coerce, and had the potential to be more profitable. Banks participated in many manipulative practices,

even writing loans for immigrants because many did not speak fluent English. Additionally, drivers trusted their brokers to help them during loan closing, even though the drivers did not know that the brokers were often being paid by banks to close these transactions.

After the economic recession in 2008, lending practices got worse; lenders began to encourage refinancing as medallion prices increased, made borrowers pay various fees instead of raising interest rates and extended loan length with locked interest payments that could last as long as 50 years. Evidently, these lending practices cheated immigrants of their life savings to the point of bankruptcy or worse.

According to the New York Taxi Worker Alliance (NYTWA), at the height of the medallion market, taxi drivers were typically earning \$5,000 per month and paying around \$4,000 in loans. In 2014, the combination of a rise in ride sharing services and inflated prices led to a crash in the medallion market. Now, their average monthly income is \$3,000 with an average monthly payment of \$2,811—with an average outstanding loan balance of over \$590,000.

As the market for ride share apps grew, taxi drivers were unable to retain their old customer base and failed to keep up with their monthly loan payments. Now, following the *New York Times* investigation, it was revealed that "inflated prices and risky lending practices would have caused a collapse even if ride-hailing had never been invented." Many lenders were able to forcibly call in their loans while borrowers were left with the financial burden.

A 2017 article in the *Journal of Community Health* indicated that 55% of drivers said it was difficult to cover all household expenses, 33% said their income was just enough to cover all expenses and only 12% indicated that they were to cover all expenses with some left over. In the same survey, 82% of drivers reported being at or close to the point of running out of money for food. In one of the most extreme cases, Mr. Hoque, a driver who was convinced to buy a medallion worth \$1.7 million, explains that "it's an unhuman[sic] life... I drive and drive and drive. But I don't know what my destination is."

This financial stress and daily life as a driver has also led to adverse impact on physical and mental health. An article from the *Journal of Community Health* conducted surveys on over 900 drivers and found that "among African American men, financial strain has been associated with shorter leukocyte telomere length, an indicator of cellular aging." The article goes on to explain that among South Asian drivers, there is the added social stress of fulfilling familial obligations by being the main source of income.

For nine drivers, the stress took such a toll that they died by suicide between 2018-2020. A *New York Times* article told the story of one of these drivers. Kenny was a driver from

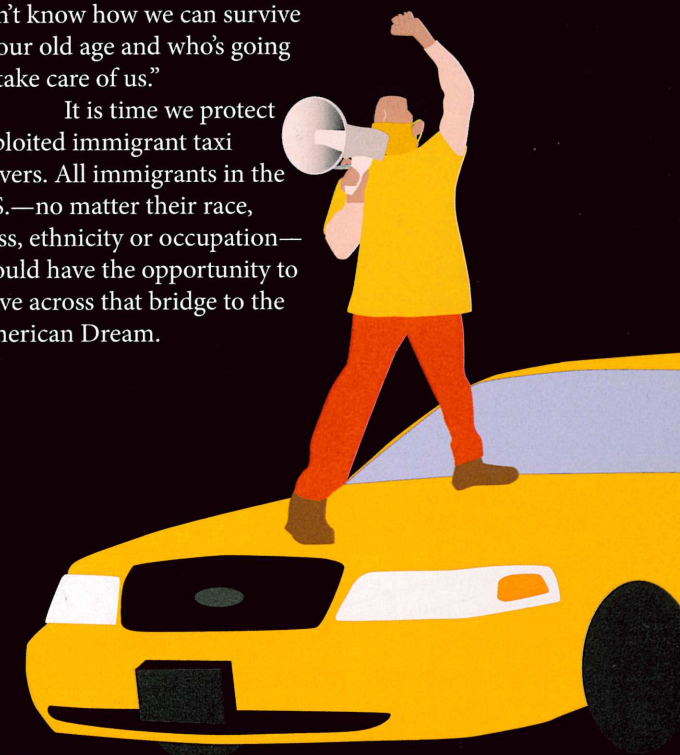
Myanmar and he bought his medallion in 2014. He was happy to have a stable income for the first time and even started helping other Asian immigrants transition to becoming drivers. When the medallion bubble burst, Kenny asked the banks for leniency, which they did not provide. He was paying his daughter's college tuition and for his wife's cancer treatment. He eventually had to refinance his loan for a second time to make payments and provide for his family. When this became too much, he was driven to suicide.

Right now, these taxi drivers are fighting for a bailout from congress. According to the NYTWA campaign, Executive Director Bhairavi Desai is asking for a \$125,000 ceiling on the value of medallion loans that can be amortized at 4% over 20 years.

Earlier this year, New York mayor Bill de Blasio introduced a \$65 million plan that would offer over \$25,000 of no interest support for 3,000 drivers—but the NYTWA insists that this would mostly only help lenders. Desai told the *City & State* newspaper that New York is using federal money to loan drivers the cash that Marblegate, a hedge fund among the largest holders of medallion debt, has been demanding of them—while getting no concessions from the lenders to benefit the drivers.

Since this announcement, taxi workers have been on strike, demanding a fair medallion relief plan. In a recent city hall, a current taxi driver explained why he fights; "I have no future, no health care plan, no savings, no retirement, nothing," he said. "I don't know how we can survive in our old age and who's going to take care of us."

It is time we protect exploited immigrant taxi drivers. All immigrants in the U.S.—no matter their race, class, ethnicity or occupation—should have the opportunity to drive across that bridge to the American Dream.



IT STARTS WITH THE FAMILY:

Destigmatizing Mental Health for South Asian Children



Pranjali Rajalakshmi

She/Her
Senior
Psychology

If you suspected that you were struggling with anxiety and told your parents that you wanted to see a therapist, how would your family react? In the United States as of 2019, only 41% of the people who had a mental disorder in the past year received professional health care or other services according to the Mental Health First Aid. This number is less than half the population of the United States, showcasing how stigmatized mental health and its care is in this country alone.

Zooming out and looking at this from a more holistic perspective, it is estimated by Our World in Data that about one billion people have a mental health disorder. That is a seventh of the population of the world. Within this one billion estimate, only a small minority actually receive therapy and resources for these disorders. There are many factors that play a role in determining if someone will seek out help or not; one of these is the stigmatization of mental health in non-Western countries and, more specifically, South Asian nations.

In a survey I conducted among the Saint Louis University student population, 53% of those surveyed stated that their families were not very supportive of mental health. Furthermore, one third of the responses stated their family would not allow them to go to therapy. These students were all of Asian or Hispanic descent. However, when asked if students would consider speaking out about mental health to their families, such as arguing with them or educating, over 93% stated they would, showing the lack of stigmatization that follows this generation.

One would think that since mental health is widely discussed in Western countries, that families that live here or have moved here would be more willing to listen and accept the phenomenon of mental health care. However, this was not the case in my survey as about 95% of the respondents' families have been in the United States for over 20 years. These statistics show us that while real-life experiences might be different, the traditional mindsets of South Asia individuals is difficult to overcome.

One other aspect that should be looked into is the responses of family members when they learn that their children might have a mental health disorder. Some

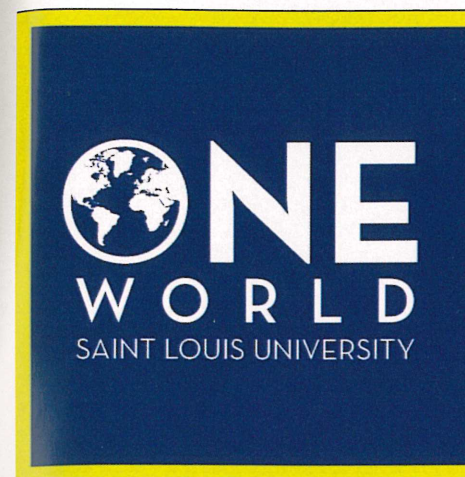
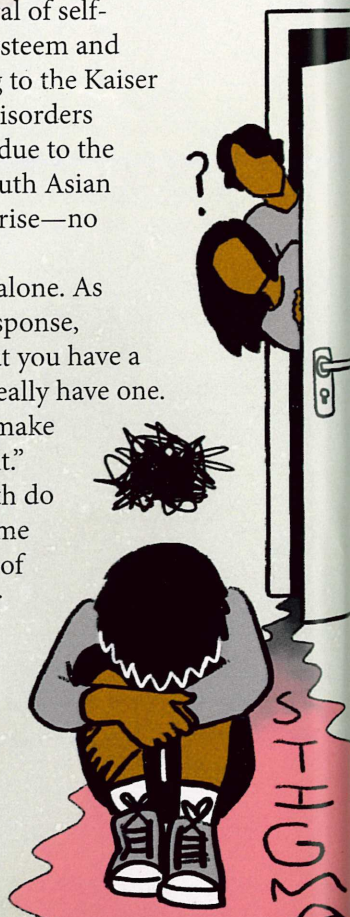
students stated that their family "would be quick to deny that they do" while others stated "they would make fun of me or not believe me." Many other students stated that their families would be shocked or confused. In many South Asian households, having a mental disorder means something terrible has happened in your life. Many parents do not understand that these psychological issues do not have to stem from a particular event, but can be caused by other factors as well.

However, we also must look at this from the perspective of those who were raised in these South Asian countries before emigrating to the West. Their lives were almost completely different before moving to western countries that are more open to mental health care, have more resources and are generally more accepting of such issues. All of our struggles stem from not being able to seek resources but, for South Asian children raised in the West, we at least have our friends and other distractions to help cope. What could those who immigrate at a later age do, besides suppress any despondent feelings and carry on with their lives?

We are presented with difficulties every single day and, amidst the current pandemic, social situations are limited and isolation is expected. Without proper resources or help, it becomes a downward spiral of self-blame, lack of self-confidence, self-esteem and overall mental instability. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, mental health disorders have risen over 35% in the last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic alone, and South Asian children are a major portion of this rise—no matter when or if they immigrated.

But remember, you are not alone. As one person stated in their survey response, "Even when people don't believe that you have a problem it doesn't mean you don't really have one. No matter who doubts you, always make sure to look out for your own benefit."

Struggles from mental health do not just come from trauma, they come from homework, social circles, lack of sleep, job searches: anything in your life. More acceptance from families regarding mental health care can save and support South Asian children living in the West.



OUR MISSION

We are already one, but we imagine that we are not. OneWorld exists to rediscover that, while we are many in our cultures, religions and struggles, we are one in our common humanity. We yearn to remove the barriers of ignorance and injustice, because the most basic and unchanging truth that unites us is the infinite value of the human person. OneWorld emphasizes this unity by raising awareness of social injustice, inspiring action and transforming our hearts, minds and society.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The support of OneWorld's sponsors ensures that our organization will continue to grow and become a more sustainable and meaningful community project. To inquire about supporting us next semester, please email oneworldmagazine@gmail.com



CONNECT WITH ONEWORLD



oneworldmagazine@gmail.com



facebook.com/LiveOneWorld



[@oneworldmagazine](https://www.instagram.com/oneworldmagazine)



oneworldmagazine.wixsite.com/website

“Passion is the bridge that takes you
from pain to change”

- *Frida Kahlo*